IMPASSE OR OPPORTUNITY?

THE SITUATION AFTER LAMBETH

MALCOLM SPENCER, M.A.

Student Christian Movement

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BY

MALCOLM SPENCER, M.A.

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"THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH," ETC.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT is an interdenominational body, and different views on the Church are therefore represented in its membership. This book is not issued as a statement of the opinions of the Movement on the subject of 'Christian Unity.' It is offered as expressing a point of view worthy of attention at the present time.

Readers are reminded of *Thoughts on Unity*, by the Rt. Rev. Neville Talbot, Bishop of Pretoria, also published by the Student Christian Movement, which discusses the subject from another point of view.

PREFACE.

I MUST ask forgiveness for adding yet another to the long list of books which have been written on Christian Unity, and also for writing in so personal a way; but I have something to say that I do not think is being said. I put it in this personal form because it is the result of personal experience, and because I cannot claim that it is yet representative.

The bane of much discussion of Christian Unity is that one has to hear the same things said so many times over—and things that cannot be said in very few words. The small public that is really interested has heard and read the same arguments so many times, and paid so often to read them yet again, that it has almost given up buying and reading any more. To discuss is one matter; but to read is quite another. So as not to be tedious I have therefore been scrupulously brief, especially when standing on familiar ground.

What I have written, I have written under a sense of strong constraint. It has seemed to me that the Lambeth Appeal has opened to the Church a door of great opportunity; and no one is hastening to go through. If anything that I can say can open that door a little wider, I am bound to say it. I am especially debtor to the cause of Christian Unity: for I have had, for a Free Churchman, unique opportunities of entering intimately into the Catholic position. My supreme and outstanding debt I have acknowledged in my dedication.

MALCOLM SPENCER.

TO MY WIFE:

WITHOUT WHOM THIS BOOK COULD NOT
HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

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Impasse or Opportunity?

CHAPTER I.

The End of a Decade.

1. *The Flowing Tide*, 1910-1920.

THE ten years which passed between the holding of the great Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the meeting of Bishops at Lambeth in 1920 were years full of incident and full of promise for the movement toward Reunion. I am not going to attempt to retell with any detail the story of those years. It will be generally familiar to those who are likely to read this book and it is easily accessible to others.[1] Something must, however, be said to recall the sense of earnest expectation with which many of us looked to the Lambeth Conference and awaited what it would say concerning Christian Unity.

Edinburgh, 1910, marked the beginning of a new epoch of brotherly recognition among bodies of Christians in this country who had for long looked askance at each other, if indeed they had so much

[1] See for instance the volume issued by the S.P.C.K., *Documents bearing on the Problem of Christian Unity and Fellowship*, 1916-20 (2s. net).

as deigned to look at each other at all. Their common co-operation in face of the world mission of Christianity made them aware in a new way that they were about the same business—the business of Christ. The members of different Churches seem to have awaked to this recognition at a deeper level of their consciousness than before. At any rate they began to set out seriously to explore the way toward their Reunion. So we were presently arrested by the world-wide activity of that Movement toward an ecumenical discussion of the vexed questions of 'Faith and Order,' which first reached the stage of international conference at Geneva in 1920. Here at home a responsible committee, jointly appointed by the Anglican Archbishops and the Free Church Denominations to work towards the Faith and Order Conference, was issuing manifestos which proclaimed a much closer agreement than they had been expected to reach. The fruits of the personal fellowship in Christ into which the Student Christian Movement had brought so large a number of influential men and women were already being gathered in mutual sympathy and understanding. War-time emergency conditions also brought about a number of practical accommodations which seemed to imply a greater mutual recognition than any on which we had previously been able to count. From various parts of the world, and especially from the Mission Field, we heard of experiments in Intercommunion and of proposals for Reunion which made us hope that the old era of isolation was breaking up. Those of the separated Churches who stood nearest to each

other felt that this was their opportunity to make a practical demand for new measures of mutual recognition, including the authorization of a more unfettered interchange of ministry and a broader sacramental co-operation, and this demand the Mansfield conferences presently put into shape. All over the country, too, there were conferences of more limited and private composition, all energetically attempting to pave the way by a suggestion here and an argument there, to the framing of proposals which would bring at least some of the Churches, and especially the Church of England and the Free Churches, into closer organic relations than ever before.

2. *Lambeth*, 1920.

It was therefore with high expectation, mingled with suppressed anxiety lest what we hoped for could not be achieved so soon, that many of us were looking toward the Lambeth Conference. When the result was made known[1] many of us Free Churchmen were at first overwhelmed with the apparent magnanimity of the Bishops' pronouncement. But that pronouncement brought the matter so near and to such practical issues that we were presently made to realize how exacting must be the terms upon which so great an historic dispute can be resolved.

Without doubt the "Appeal to all Christian people from the Bishops assembled in the Lambeth Conference in 1920" came to the circles in which

[1] The appeal and the detailed recommendations of the Bishops are printed with other resolutions and reports, and with an introductory Encyclical, in the *Report of the Lambeth Conference*, 1920. S.P.C.K. 1s.

unity was most discussed and desired with almost a shock of joy. It seemed so full of Christian charity, of faith, and of courage. It was indeed magnanimous, nobly magnanimous in its approach to the baffling problem it had to face. Could anything have surpassed it in brotherly regard for other communions; in glorious recognition of their spiritual gifts and graces; in sensitive acknowledgment of the work of the Holy Spirit in them and in their ministries; in willingness to make amends for past faults? There was in it an evident desire to assume the Christian standing of other bodies as assured in fact, however dubious (from its own standpoint) in outward form. There was a remarkable readiness to defer to other people's consciences upon all matters which could by any stretch of (episcopalian) imagination be left to individual freedom of interpretation. There was an evident attempt to reduce to a minimum the demand for conformity to prescribed standards of belief and practice, and to ease the way of reunion (once the principles had been agreed) by large concessions and accommodations in the time of transition. But it very soon became evident that there lay at the heart of the Bishops' proposals conditions and conceptions which created the gravest difficulties from the Free Church side.

It is unnecessary to set out the terms of the Appeal at any length; I need only recall its leading features. It rests, one may say, upon a new sense of responsibility for the broken and weakened condition of the Church to-day, and upon a new vision of the Churches coming together again into one great

family circle—not as erring children submitting once more to the discipline of a forsaken home, but as honourable sons and daughters each bringing back some distinctive treasure won from the past to enrich the fellowship of the restored family life. Each would continue in some degree to follow its own tradition and live its own separate life; but all would be bound together as a single whole by the possession of a common basis and a common practice on a few main points. The common bonds or links which seem to the Bishops essential to this unity of life are the common acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as the record of God's dealing with men and of the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed as the sufficient expression of the Christian faith, the rites of Baptism and Holy Communion as the common sacraments of the Church and a common ministry based upon the sanction of Christ and recognized by the whole Church as having due authority. To have such authority in Anglican eyes, its mode of appointment would need to include a commission through the historic episcopate.

I am not now going to analyse the Lambeth statements any further. Subsequent chapters will enable me to say better what I have to say in support of its main positions and in appeal against some of its provisions and proposals. All I wish to do in this chapter is to record the strangely compounded impression it created of a magnificently Christian utterance leading up to a position of the gravest difficulty, if not of actual *impasse*. The two elements were brought out for me personally in a very dramatic

way by the impact of the appeal upon the annual conference of the Swanwick Free Church Fellowship at the end of the August of 1920. No widely representative body of Free Church men and women would have been more likely to give a wholehearted welcome to an eirenical proposal from the Anglican side. The gathering was indeed profoundly stirred by the Lambeth Appeal. The spirit of the Bishops' message spoke to the spirit of the Conference as the Voice of Christ Himself. The gravity of the issue was keenly felt and the time-table was strained to make room for the fullest possible consideration of it. Yet it was perfectly clear that on some most vital counts the conference was unconvinced that the Appeal was one to which they could respond.

3. *The Free Church Reply.*

Time has now enabled the Free Church mind to express itself upon the proposals, and it has done so in a document which, though it disclaims any formal authority, is none the less thoroughly representative. It is the statement of a committee jointly appointed by the two most generally representative of the Free Church bodies, the Free Church Council and the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. It is not final because it is for the Free Churches separately and not for any existing Federation of them to reply, authoritatively, to this Appeal. It is rather a counsel addressed by a jointly representative committee of Free Church leaders to Free Church people in general and to the several Denominational authorities in particular. But it is undoubtedly the

utterance of a body thoroughly representative of the opinions which usually have weight in our English Free Church assemblies.

It is true that the Reply has been framed under rather different conditions from the Appeal. It is not the work of a body meeting for so long a period or in such retirement from their ordinary engagements and in the centre of so intense a concentration of the prayers of the Church. In that sense it certainly must lack something of the spiritual authority of the Appeal. And this is all too evident in the document itself. For whereas the Lambeth Appeal wears (we might almost say) the impressive aspect of a fresh revelation, the Free Church Reply strikes upon the mind rather as the expected echo of the voice of the Spirit heard in the Free Churches in the past. Indeed the matter has not yet driven us to any sustained attempt to reach a new standpoint by a quite unwonted concentration of thought and prayer. Still, the Reply is indubitably representative, and even the manner of its production reflects, perhaps, the degree of importance which we in the Free Churches attach to the whole subject at the present time.

The gist of the Reply, which has been made public,[1] is as follows. On three separate counts the writers declare their grave difficulty in the terms of the Appeal. In the first place, they ask in effect for a more unequivocal recognition by the Anglican Churches that the Nonconformist Churches are

[1] *The Free Churches and the Lambeth Appeal.* R.T.S. 1s. (30 pages. March, 1921).

already branches of the one Church of Christ. In the second place, they challenge the assumptions which lie behind the Bishops' insistence on episcopal ordination as an essential condition of ministry in the one Church of Christ, conceiving these to imply a doctrine of the exclusive (recognizable) communication of grace through certain formally appointed channels, a doctrine which they hold to be in direct contradiction to essential principles of the Gospel. Against this view they assert a contrary doctrine, which connects the communication of Christian grace with the free and inspired proclamation of the Word of the Gospel rather than with any conceivable principle of Church order. In the third place, they reiterate the plea, which was embodied in the famous Mansfield resolutions, for a general interchange of pulpits and a largely increased (however carefully conditioned) practice of intercommunion, as the proper expression of our existing common membership in the Church of Christ, and as the most fruitful step towards a fuller unity, first of understanding and then of organization.

4. *The Peril of the Position reached.*

I have stated the position with the utmost brevity. I have attempted neither to give the Free Church position the weight which it would have if it were more fully stated and supported by quotation, nor to argue against what seem to me to be its excesses, reserving to later chapters what I have to say in the way of exposition and criticism. I am concerned

only at the moment to bring out the fact that on three cardinal points representative Free Church opinion offers a firm opposition to the precise proposals of the Appeal from Lambeth. The spirit of the Appeal is appreciated and welcomed. The advance which it constitutes upon all previous statements is cordially acknowledged. Its earnest desire for unity is caught up and reciprocated. And yet the response is mainly one of challenge. The response is, in effect, a *non possumus*. So far as official action is concerned, it looks as though we were approaching an utter deadlock.

The danger is that discussion may swing lamely back to the old controversies upon which the arguments are all stale and men's minds already set. When that happens, argument soon becomes impatient and even cantankerous. Hitherto, since the publication of the Lambeth Appeal, there has been a remarkable readiness to think and speak charitably and even hopefully of one another. Men have been unwilling to say any word which would embitter a situation containing new elements of promise. They were disposed to give the new hopes raised by a new proposal their utmost chance. It was a sign of the powerful workings of grace in the Anglican Communion that even the *Church Times* has resisted its chronic temptation to captious pleasantries and naughty wit when discussing Nonconformity, and has made the most of our common Christianity.

But hopes which come to no fruition presently beget disappointment and even bitterness, and already one hears adverse comments on the Lambeth pro-

posals descending to the level of insinuation. It is suggested that the proposals contain no real offer of reconciliation: they take back with one hand what they offer with the other. They are the utterances of diplomatists skilled in disguising the harsh outline of their stipulations in a fair show of words. And after all, what could one expect from Lambeth but an ingenious compromise to maintain the formal integrity of a body so hopelessly divided in opinion as the Church of England! The bogey of Rome presents itself again, and the old formulæ of condemnation against institutionalism and formalism are repeated. Finally, Dr. T. R. Glover, having contributed a series of able and interesting articles to *The British Weekly*, republishes them in book form, with an ingenuous preface quoting Dr. Clifford in approval of what he has written, as an expression of the thoughts and experiences of all Baptists. The book is, indeed, a lucid and incisive statement of views which are the commonplaces of Free Church life, and have been so for generations. It is, perhaps, just as well that it should be known, if it is not already known, in Anglican circles that these are the characteristic opinions of the majority of those with whom they are offering to deal. But it is unfortunate that the book should display such an undisguised intellectual contempt for all traditionalists, and that, notwithstanding all its characteristic merits, it should show from cover to cover not the faintest recognition of anything new in the position about which it treats. There is nothing to be gained by recapitulating what all Baptists, or all Methodists, or all Episcopalians

think to-day. It is precisely these traditional views which constitute the *impasse* from which we are striving to escape.

After this it is not to be wondered at if the *Church Times* begins to write in an "I told you so" vein of cynicism, convinced that Nonconformity has no real wish for reunion except on its own old terms; and if Bishops, like his Lordship of Bombay, are surprised and puzzled.[1] If this sort of thing goes much farther and nothing is done to provide us with some new expression of unity, in deed as well as in word, the spirit of unity, undoubtedly in the ascendant in 1920, may be frittered away in disappointment and criticism before it has achieved any goal.

We are threatened then with disaster. For it would be, indeed, a supreme disaster if the tide which was mounting towards the flood before Lambeth, and which was manifestly flowing strongly in the historic chamber in which the Bishops met, should be allowed to ebb away in the fruitless discussion of irreconcilable proposals; and such, it seems to me, are all the proposals which are officially promulgated to-day.

But though the official positions are at the moment irreconcilable, our leaders who represent these positions are not even in need of reconciliation. There is between them a large measure of spiritual accord. They have drawn nearer than ever before in the mutual recognition of their common standing in the

[1] See *Reunion, The Church and the Ministry: a review of some recent phases in the discussion of Reunion.* S.P.C.K. Depôt, Bombay, 1921.

Grace of Christ, their common possession of His Holy Spirit.

The hour is one for some heartening common action, some outward fresh expression of the fact that we share—however incompletely—in a common faith and a common life, some united expectant exploration of the realm of Christian experience which lies beneath the formal outlines of our declared creeds. It would be indeed a tragedy if the new-found realization of the extent of our common inheritance and the wealth of our several treasures should be overlaid by a premature concentration of discussion on any formally controverted points. And that might easily happen. It is indeed likely to happen unless our responsible leaders can turn their energies from the channels of official negotiation into the channels of concerted action. The common action which I suggest as most appropriate to the moment is common action to promote the fellowship of all Christian people in attempts to understand the hopeful features of the position we have now reached and the positive values which are still at stake. Why not make that the business of the next decade?

CHAPTER II.

The Immediate Gains.

CONSIDER, then, the positive gains of the position defined at Lambeth. There is something indelicate in saying overmuch in praise of the temper of a statement, as though it might have been expected to be otherwise. Yet it would be foolish to pass over without comment the extraordinarily Christian spirit of the Lambeth Appeal. It reaches a height of graciousness and a vigour of adventurous purpose which in themselves bear witness to divine inspiration. For they are achieved amid enormous difficulties and without the sacrifice of religious conviction to personal sentiment. The Bishops have, in an unusual measure, succeeded in identifying themselves in the guilt and shame that attach to our present state of disunion, and in crediting the members and ministers of other Churches with a thankworthy share of the riches of Christ. They have shown themselves extraordinarily ready to shake themselves free from the incubus of the past and to make a fresh start along unanticipated lines in a new "adventure of faith and of goodwill." They have undoubtedly achieved for themselves, along some lines if not along others, the "new outlook" which they say is demanded by "the new age." The courage, the

humility and the fine charity which breathe through their words make it easily possible to credit the statement with which the Archbishop of York concludes the report of the sub-committee on Reunion of which he was the president. After having anticipated the verdict which some would pass upon it for being too lax in principle and too rash in movement, and which others would pass upon it for being too rigid and immovable, he added in conclusion: "Yet most earnestly do we hope that there may be real value found in what has been arrived at with so large a measure of unity, and with a sense of constraint which surprised ourselves, and seemed, as we reverently believe, to be of the Spirit's guidance. . . . Certainly the sense of being drawn together and drawn upwards was never so strong or so uplifting as when we were moved to look beyond smaller ideals and limited agreements to the vision of the One Holy Catholic Church of the Redeemer, into which all the divided groups of His faithful people must bring what they have of glory and honour, and which cannot be made perfect till all its parts are drawn together in Him. If there is any value in the Report it comes from the inspiration of that only true and divine ideal."

Before occupying our thoughts too much with the precise conditions of practical procedure which the report embodies, and which it is probably proper to regard rather as suggestions, to be supplanted if need be by better ones, than as fixed and rigid stipulations, we should seek earnestly to share that vision of an inclusive Church which presented itself to the Lam-

beth Conference as a glorious ideal, and in their judgment a not impracticable ideal. For obviously it was to them a constraining and inspiring reality.

1. *Mutual Recognition.*

In three things in particular, the Lambeth Appeal supplies, it seems to me, the basis for a new concordat. In the first place, and perhaps chiefly, it is valuable for its recognition of the Christian standing of other Christians and of other groups of Christians. In several ways this common standing of episcopal and non-episcopal Christians in Christ and in His Church is confessed as it has not been confessed by high episcopal authority before. To begin with, the members of non-episcopal bodies are spoken of as "sharing (with Episcopalians) membership in the universal Church of Christ which is His Body." Next comes a phrase which speaks of the distinctive "treasures of faith and order" which are the recognizable heritage of different bodies of Christian people, indeed of "all who profess and call themselves Christian." Next we have the explicit recognition of the non-episcopal ministries as "ministries which have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace," "ministries rich in spiritual blessing," honoured by the Holy Spirit of God, "Whose call led us all to our several ministries, and Whose power enabled us to perform them." Take all this in connection with the Preamble to the whole Report, which says, "The Unity which we seek exists . . . it needs not to be made, nor to be remade, but to become

organic and visible," and we have in effect, though not in formal technical terms, a magnificently full recognition of the Christian standing of our several groups, in the light of which all else must in the end be construed.

It is perfectly true that these introductory statements are followed by particular proposals (for the episcopal ordination of ministries non-episcopally ordained) which might seem to belie the fulness of this recognition. But these proposals are markedly tentative in their form. They follow a series of phrases of a very conditional kind. " We believe it will be found," and " May we not reasonably claim," are the opening movements in this gambit of the argument. The suggestion is not put forward without the utmost possible attempt at reciprocity that the circumstances would allow, and then only under the formula " It is our hope." When such firm and unhesitating principles of recognition as those first quoted are followed by such tentative suggestions for practical procedure as these, it is surely obvious that the latter are put forward for consideration in the light of the former, and that if there is found to be any ultimate incompatibility between the two, it will be the corollaries and not the postulates of the main proposition that will be revised.

In the second place, we have in the Lambeth proposals a recognition of the permanent value of our existing groups, and of their peculiar heritages, which confirms the position argued in the last few paragraphs, and carries the matter a distinct stage further. " The vision which rises before us is that

of a Church genuinely Catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship "all who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled."

I have quoted this article of the Lambeth resolutions in full because it occupies a smaller space in their document and has received a smaller amount of attention in discussion than it seems to have occupied in the thought of the Bishops themselves. If one may judge by the emphasis laid upon it in the exposition of the whole matter written conjointly by the Bishops of Hereford, Peterborough and Zanzibar,[1] and the attempt there made to envisage its result, this conception of the continued autonomy and separateness of our existing denominations is prominent among the features which constitute the Bishops' vision a new revelation to them. Could there be a more emphatic recognition of the hand of God in the past history and present development of our existing denominations?

Again, in the Preamble to the Report, we find it affirmed that "those elements of truth about which differences have arisen are essential to the future of

[1] *Lambeth and Reunion*, 1920. S.P.C.K. 2s.

the witness of the whole Church. . . . It is not by reducing the different groups of Christians to uniformity, but by rightly using their diversity, that the Church can become all things to all men."[1] Here again it is evident that we of the Free Churches are being credited with a distinctive gift which attests at once our value and our membership as corporate entities within the one Family of God's Church.

In the third place, the Lambeth Report reveals a remarkable appreciation of the positive ideals for which the Free Churches stand. In several directions it shows a desire and an attempt to approximate to their practice and embody their principles. And this is all the more significant as it evidently is not done consciously for the purpose of promoting unity. There is indeed a deliberate advice to each of the Churches of the Anglican Communion "to develop its constitutional self-government and to give more and better opportunities for service to all its members," on the ground that "the wider and deeper, the more complete and more effective is the life of any one Church, the more points of contact will it find with others." But the appreciation of Free Church values shines out even more decidedly when the Report is not thinking of these other Churches at all, but simply of the essential nature of the Church as such. "The Church," says the Preamble, "must be itself a pattern of fellowship. It is only by showing the value and power of fellowship in itself that it can win the world to fellowship." It is indeed primarily as a Fellowship of men of

[1] *Lambeth Conference Report*, p. 12.

Christian purpose that the Preamble to the Report regards the Church—at least this is the particular aspect of the Church's life to which it desires to give prominence: and it is for the sake of establishing true fellowship in the life of the world, and not for its own sake, that it conceives the Church to exist. The first two pages of the Report, which set forth this view, establish indeed an exceptionally good foundation for harmonious reconstruction. They invest those ministries of human service and expressions of Christian fellowship, which are unconditionally proclaimed as a sphere of immediate Christian co-operation, with a spiritual significance and a deep momentousness that they have often lacked. In fact they magnify enormously that part of the Church's function in which we are already at one.

But nowhere is this new episcopal appreciation of Free Church principles more strongly evident than in the paragraph in which the encyclical explains its own authority to its own folk—evidently without conscious reference or regard to others. The Lambeth Conference, it there concludes, "does not claim to exercise any powers of control or command. It stands for the far more spiritual and more Christian principle of loyalty to the fellowship. The Churches represented in it are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognizes the restraints of truth and of love. They are not free to deny the truth. They are not free to ignore the Fellowship."[1] Could there be any better statement of the principles upon which we of the Free

[1] *Lambeth Conference*, 1920, p. 13.

Churches would wish to see the matter of Christian unity discussed? There is surely some joy in the presence of the angels, a joy not unmixed with humour, over that particular paragraph in the Lambeth Report. It makes glorious reading for those who are anxious that whatever may be the formal agreements between us when we reunite, each of us will love and cherish the principles dear to the other. When the discussion of practical issues turns into paths which are tiresome and discouraging to Free Churchmen, we may hark back to this most excellent confession of a common faith.

2. *The Invitation to Co-operate.*

I have extolled the virtues of the Lambeth Appeal for its new spirit and outlook towards the Free Churches, and in the next chapter I shall go on to extol it also for the wisdom of some of its hesitations and delays. But these advantages would, in my mind, be very seriously discounted if the new outlook did not make possible some deeply significant and immediate developments in Christian action. "Give us deeds as well as words," some are saying. "Make some forward step in practice corresponding with your forward step in thought." "If we are really fellow-members of the one Body, only needing to make our fundamental unity outwardly effective, can we not make some immediate progress toward the outward and visible realization of our fellowship?" I think we can, and that without trespassing on the ground which the Bishops have put, for the time being, out of bounds.

In the first place the Bishops recommend a general development of concerted action between the Churches "to promote the physical, moral, and social welfare of the people, and the extension of the rule of Christ among all nations and over every region of human life." Now this might mean much or little; but the whole context of the Report is favourable to its meaning much. It might mean nothing more than a painstaking attempt to render to the community those acts of human service which all good citizens would agree to be desirable: nothing more than a fellowship of common sense and good works. It might, on the other hand, mean some serious effort, requiring deep spiritual co-operation, to search out the will of Christ for modern life, and make adventures toward the better expression of His Holy and Forgiving Spirit in the communal life of our day. The hope of it having the larger meaning springs from the fact of the Bishops' deep concern for fellowship and for the better social and political expression of the spirit of fellowship which is God's will for His world.[1]

Now you can speak of service and organize service without any deep appeal to the springs of Christian motive. But when you speak of fellowship and couple the word with the name of Christ and the shedding abroad of His Spirit in the hearts of men, you enter a different region. You are in the region of the deepest Christian experience and you are knocking at the door of fresh and fuller revelations

[1] As evidenced in the quotations on p. 18.

of the ways by which the life of God may be manifested in the life of men. You are in a region which you cannot reasonably enter without taking the shoes from your feet. You must pray about these things. You must invoke the aid of the Spirit. You must call to mind the best you know of God's purpose for man and declare it. You must confront the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of the Cross of Christ. The winning of human fellowship is by the application of the salve of Christ's Passion and Resurrection to the wounds in the body of humanity. When the Bishops call us to this effort in the name of our unity in Christ and in face of the issues of our day, they call us to a deep and intimate exchange of our spiritual resources in a fellowship of Christian thought and prayer. And it is for us who claim a heritage of experience in such intimate Christian fellowship to seize the opportunity and make of it as great and high an occasion as we can.

But the opportunity does not end with the exploration of questions of Christian duty. The Bishops have in their Appeal accorded to the experiences and traditions of different bodies of Christians so distinctive a value that we may well urge upon them the importance of providing regular occasions for the mutual interchange of religious conviction regarding them. To my mind the Bishops have not recognized what Free Churchmen would recognize by instinct, how necessarily mutual recognition must lead to mutual fellowship, mutual exchange of spiritual knowledge, by every means not technically barred. Not all the members of our Churches would

profit by such mutual intercourse; but surely it is clear that all who could so profit should be encouraged to share with each other the religious convictions and experiences which lie behind their divergent religious practices.

This does not mean that we should multiply debates on the terms of reunion which have been set forth. In the present state of opinion and with the present degree of mutual understanding among the members of our several Churches that might be an unprofitable thing to do. What would be much more profitable would be an attempt to explain to each other the values we severally attach to the different elements of our religious practice. We have very different conceptions of the way in which the experience of the individual is meant either to enrich the corporate experience or to rest upon it and arise out of it. Our different views of the formal questions of organization which have to be adjusted, spring from these different conceptions of the value and use of the different means of grace. The ultimate agreements we need to reach in order to secure an effective Christian unity are agreements on matters of this kind. Or at least we must understand each other's values, where they agree and where they differ.

Now these questions are not questions only for experts in theology and ecclesiastical procedure. They are questions for ministers and laymen generally. Indeed it is only so far as the rank and file of our clergy and laity, or at least those of them who exercise any teaching office in the Church, are educated in a common school of Christian conference on

these questions that the deepest unity will ever be achieved.

Could any action better express the new attitude which Lambeth has encouraged us to take toward each other than some concerted official effort to bring this to pass. And does not the occasion demand that those whose hearts have lately been stirred by the hope of unity should find such opportunities of fellowship at the deepest level of their religious faith and feeling? Some new and moving experience of Christian fellowship is needed to evoke in us all that passion of love for God and man without which we cannot be One. "It was in passion we parted," said Father Talbot recently; "for God's sake let it be in passion that we reunite."

CHAPTER III.

The Compensations of Delay.

I NOW turn from matters in which the Lambeth Appeal gives widespread satisfaction (large or small according to our estimate of the relative importance of the things granted and the things withheld), to matters in which Free Churchmen generally feel at first no little disappointment. I refer especially to those articles in the Report which decide against any immediate general interchange of pulpits or sharing of intercommunion, and against the unconditional recognition of our present ministries as already adequately endowed for a ministry in the united Church. And here I want to urge that these stipulations, disappointing as they seem, are really in the interests of clarity and truth. They are, I believe, instances from the Anglican side of that unwillingness to build on conscious ambiguities which our own Free Church spokesmen have in another connection insisted upon, as essential to true fellowship and progress.

1. *Concerning the Interchange of Pulpits.*

Take first the question of the immediate interchange of pulpits. The proposal presupposes a parity of ministerial qualifications and functions which I cannot think exists. The refusal of the pro-

posal is generally taken as a slight upon non-episcopal ministries, a slight which we resent in principle and regret all the more in this instance because it seems to annul the cordial words of recognition set down in other paragraphs of the Report. But this I take it is due to a confusion. There may be a disparity of ministries asserted without any slight upon either. I believe there is, in this case, a disparity of this kind. It arises from our different historical emphasis and traditions. Slight as the disparity may have been at first, and slight as it still is in some cases (e.g., as between the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches), it is still, in general and in principle (as between the Anglican and the Free Churches), real and important.

For the Free Church ministry is in the main, and in its root intention, personal and charismatic, dependent upon individual spiritual gifts; whilst the Anglican ministry is in the main, and in its root intention, institutional and representative, dependent upon official authorization. No doubt the Anglican minister constantly exercises individual spiritual gifts just as the Free Church minister constantly speaks as a representative Catholic churchman. It may even be argued that certain of our Free Church ministries are indeed better equipped by their training, than certain sections of the Anglican ministry are equipped by their official authorization, to make the Catholic faith of the ages understood. None the less it cannot be disputed that we welcome to our Free Church ministries many whose primary qualification for their post is not their power of representing the faith in

its historic proportions, but simply their power of speaking from hearts touched by Christ Himself to hearts hungering for Him. And that is not the primary qualification for the Anglican pulpit. The Anglican Church has not welcomed thus far to its pulpits any of its own sons and daughters solely on the ground that they possess these gifts of the Spirit. Its pulpit is in strict theory governed by the aim of providing official exposition of the doctrine and practice of the Anglican Church and therefore it is not open to those who have not been ordained according to its own rite.

When, therefore, we ask for interchange of pulpits, we are not simply asking for a recognition of our ministries as ministries honoured by God. We are asking for recognition as fit and qualified and fully responsible exponents of the principles of the Church of England: or else we are asking the Church of England to change the principles by which it governs its own ministerial acts in order to accommodate them to ours. Put in that way, the thing obviously cannot be done. Or at least it should not be done unless and until the different conceptions of the ministry which underlie our different Church practices have been clearly recognized and the Anglican principle modified in favour of ours, and that not for the sake of accommodating Free Churchmen, but from a direct desire to open the Anglican pulpit to wider purposes.

2. *Concerning Ordination and Intercommunion.*

Rather similar points arise when we pass to con-

sider intercommunion and ordination. In neither case are our present ways and theories so strictly on a par that a simple reciprocity is possible. The ministry of the non-episcopal Churches magnifies the minister's individual gifts: the ministry of the episcopal Churches, whilst valuing and using individual gifts, lays its greatest stress upon the submission of the individual minister to a corporate tradition of word and act. Nowhere is this more so than in the sacrament of communion, where every tone and gesture is regulated and subdued, in order that the individual Christian experience of the ministrant at the moment may be subordinated to the more typical experience of the body of Christian people in all time. Whether or not we appreciate the aim and understand the procedure, they are obviously distinctive and founded on a coherent idea.

Again, the forms connected with the ordination of ministers are congruous with the forms employed in the regular services and sacraments of the Church. They belong to that particular order of religious practice. They have their own accent, their own idiom, their own values, not easily explained or translated. And the *ethos* of the whole system is clearly different from that of the Free Church system. Whether or no the one system is better and more Christian than the other, they are so obviously different that it is at least arguable that harm as well as good might be done by allowing a free passage from one to the other without more explanation and interpretation than is at present practicable.

Deeply, then, as we may regret our continued ex-

clusion from full sacramental communion with Episcopalians, I think we should at least be able to recognize that there is a reason for that exclusion which does not involve any necessary slur upon our own sacraments or our own ministries. And, for my own part, I believe that if we are driven by this exclusion to recognize that there is in our sacramental practice, as well as in our pulpit practice, a real disparity involving no slight upon either, we shall be led to distinguish and articulate differences of emphasis, and so of value and meaning, which it will be of inestimable value for us all to understand. I shall attempt later to put forward my own view of the differences of meaning and value in our different sacramental practices which it is possible to distinguish and important to preserve. All that I want to make good at the moment is the reasonableness of the Anglican hesitation to encourage or even allow a freedom of spiritual intercourse which would be natural enough if we all spoke the same language and all meant the same thing. But as a matter of fact we speak different languages and mean (at least slightly) different things. Moreover, there has not been time and thought enough expended yet by representative exponents of our different Church principles sympathetically qualified to explain themselves to each other, to make it generally possible for our Churches to interpret each other to their own members. Upon that effort we are now driven back.

There are some things which we want to share because we approach them with common presuppositions, and these we want to share without delay.

There are others which we want to share, precisely because we approach them with different presuppositions: these we can only share effectively when we are able to make the differences of presupposition and their bearing on our differences of practice clearly understood. In the interests of mutual understanding and to avoid building on "conscious ambiguities," let us be content to delay. To ignore the difficulties now might bring into being a premature, unstable, and unedifying combination of disparate elements, leading only to misunderstanding from the outset and confusion in the end.

On the further question of reordination, only one thing need be said now. The episcopal ministries commonly claim a kind of power, by virtue of their mode of institution, which ours commonly repudiate. Our spokesmen urge that we should not be asked to undergo the episcopal form of ordination unless we are substantially agreed as to the powers which the ministry is held to acquire by virtue of that rite. I urge that it is equally undesirable that we should claim to exercise the functions which follow in the Anglican system upon episcopal ordination, unless we are so agreed. Still less have we any right to ask the Anglicans to cease their insistence upon the necessity of the episcopal rite, whilst we refuse to claim explicitly that we do already possess the particular qualifications which they hold the rite conveys. The argument which some of us put forward for our unqualified recognition as ministers of the Church, by virtue of the act of ordination performed by our own Church, is annulled by the arguments which others of us put

forward in criticism of the whole conception of the grace of ordination. There is too great confusion here for the foundation of any strong case for a forward step. Granted that there is no less confusion amongst the exponents of Anglicanism, the argument is all the stronger for further elucidation before we proceed. To found the future upon the present chaos would be to court disaster.

These things being so, I hope that my Free Church friends will make the most of the opportunities of fellowship that lie within their present grasp, realizing their value so highly that they will be ready to turn away resolutely from coveting those which have been for the present denied them. In the nature of things the Lambeth conditions cannot well be revised for another ten years or so. It would be a pity to lose those ten years, at a critical juncture, by any churlish refusal to recognize the prescribed conditions as the best which episcopal good-will could offer in this present year of grace. For it is surely vital that these next few years should be marked by the very fullest expression of fellowship that can be achieved. However we may regret the continued restriction of Christian fellowship, we are bound to respect the Anglican argument that they would be overriding a distinction of deep importance to them if they complied with our present request, for they would be compromising their testimony to the Church—a thing they have no more right to do than we to compromise our testimony to the Gospel.

For the interchange of pulpits it is not difficult to find alternatives equally useful if the object be

the interchange of teaching, of experience, of points of view. There is hardly any limit to what can be done in the arrangement of joint meetings of all kinds. I fancy there is no serious limit to the possibility of occasional inter-visitation of whole congregations. An exchange of congregations someone has suggested, is more important than an exchange of pulpits. We should then hear each other's sermons in their proper setting. Even in the matter of intercommunion, where the way is more definitely blocked, it is still possible for those who are really keen on their relations with other Christians to make opportunities for intercommunion with them. In occasional joint conferences concerned with Christian unity, authority for some kind of united communion can be officially obtained. And it may not be ill that the privilege should be confined for a period to those who are really zealous for it. For, after all, we have big differences in our methods of worship which our people do not in the least understand. There is a big work of mutual interpretation to be done; and it is well that we should be stimulated to get to know one another more intimately before we formally unite.

3. *The World Setting of the Problem.*

The present disappointment of Free Church hopes has its compensations also from another standpoint. It introduces us to the criteria which we are bound to face before we can have communion with the Roman and Eastern Communions. It compels us to face the problem of Reunion as a whole. It chal-

lenges us to prove ourselves, whether our concern is simply and utterly the total unity of Christ's Church, or whether it is merely some small instalment of unity, congenial to our tastes and perhaps consoling to our wounded self-esteem. Is it a desire to be identified, both for glory and for shame, with "all who profess and call themselves Christians," and a readiness to pay the cost of that identification by the acceptance of new loyalties and fresh restrictions; or is it rather the desire to escape from a local English condition of friction and isolation which is inconvenient and sometimes galling, and which seems to be nearly an anachronism? Is it the transcendental love of Christ without stint or limit, or is it only a human desire for the greater efficiency and glory of that particular sector of the circle of His followers in which we and our near ecclesiastical neighbours are found?

The Lambeth Appeal is bracing and stimulating to us, if for no other reason, because it links us for the first time in definite practical terms—if it be only in a hypothesis—with every other branch of Christ's Church. To be so linked is in itself an inestimable gain. It shows us a little more clearly where we stand in the whole body, makes the distant members of Christ's Church more actual to us, and our relations or want of relations with them more significant and appealing. For it must be confessed that we of the Free Churches are apt to look upon our cousins of Rome and Constantinople very much as barbarians, if not actually as pagans. But here is a document which embraces us all in a single scheme, and believes

that it is speaking to the condition of us all. It brings us for the first time within hailing distance. To read the sections of the Appeal which relate the Church of England to the other episcopal communions is a liberal education in comprehensiveness. The Church of Sweden, the Moravian Community, the Old Catholics, the Armenians, the Syrian Churches and the Greek Orthodox Church, all are definitely in the picture. They are not only within hailing distance: most of them are already in practical touch. Rome only remains silent; but we are assured that the Appeal is not even at Rome capable of being regarded as quite irrelevant.

It is also encouraging to realize by a comparison of the resolutions dealing with the Anglican relations to non-Episcopalians with those dealing with their relation with other episcopal communions, that the issues raised in each case are precisely the same. We are facing the fundamental issues of total Reunion, and facing them all at once. We are facing conditions which have been laid down for all. They are not conceived to meet what might be regarded as our peculiar weaknesses and defects. They are the traditional conditions of agreement in creeds, in sacramental procedure, and in the practice of ordinations —only modified by such accommodations as seemed possible to ease the way to meet our particular case.

These facts should surely help us Free Churchmen to accept the Lambeth document as a genuine and strenuous attempt to represent to us a strict minimum of the conformity to traditional practices which is necessary to Christian unity. This document is not

the utterance of a militant and exclusive Catholicism: it is the utterance of a body deeply weighted with the sense of its responsibility to be a moderating influence upon the demands of the "ultra-Catholic." I believe that it contains within it the salve to the severity of its own harsher demands, as in subsequent chapters I shall try to show.[1] I believe also that these demands are capable of such modifications as might bring them (without contravening either the spirit or letter of the Bishops' statement) within our reach.[2] Before attempting to prove this, I must, however, devote two chapters to more general questions.

[1] See Chapters VI, VII, VIII. [2] See Chapters IX and X.

CHAPTER IV.

Christian Reciprocity.

1. *Interdenominationalism.*

IN our youth we were told, when provoked to anger, to count ten before we spoke. It is to be presumed that in the old days our fathers in the Church, when provoked to ecclesiastical anger, were exempt from any such precept. But the times have changed and soon it may become the rule, before engaging in theological controversy, to repeat the intriguing word "interdenominationalism." It is practically ten syllables, and it is not yet familiar enough to be spoken as rapidly as we can count. It is a cumbrous word; but till we have learned to reimport its fulness of meaning into the great word "charity," we shall not be able to spare it. Already it has an honourable record of achievement.

To begin with, it has delivered us from the misguided attempt to realize our unity by minimizing the points on which we differed, and taking account only of those on which we were agreed. It is now settled, beyond shadow of doubt, that we are not seeking the greatest common denominator as a basis for unity. We have realized that our distinctive tenets and practices may be amongst our most valued possessions, and that it is hardly worth while making

up a common party if we leave them behind at home. We owe it chiefly to the "Catholics" that this point has been insisted upon, and acknowledge our debt to them for the considerable gain that has accrued.

For, as the time has gone on, we have realized more and more clearly that these distinctive possessions are things we hold in trust for the children of other Churches no less than for the children of our own. Some characteristics are of course rather of local, temporary, or temperamental value; and these "the blessed word" bids us permit rather than imitate. But others are more fundamental and universal, and these it bids us not only retain and perpetuate for ourselves and our successors, but also to explain and commend, and if possible pass on to others.

And this way of thinking is gradually begetting in us a new habit of mind. We are coming to suppose, as a matter of course, that the things in other Churches which once seemed to us merely strange, or even alien, are not simply permissible or even valuable to others, but may actually prove to contain a core of absolute goodness and truth which we cannot afford to be without. We have learned that this may be true of the very beliefs and practices which, at first, we took to be the flat contradictions of our own most cherished thoughts and ways. I do not say that this new habit of mind is becoming universal. But the Bishops, at least, have caught the new temper, as the Lambeth statement clearly shows.

Now, if this were nothing but a lazy latitudinarianism, a careless readiness to allow that anything

may be true in its own way, it would not be worth writing about; but it is nothing of the kind. It is a genuine recognition that there is truth in other systems, distorted for us because we see it through the refracting medium of our own, and that our own truth may be similarly distorted for others. Hence we are bound, and know that we are bound, to an effort of reinterpretation, both of that which we hold and have failed to interpret to others, and of that which we have rejected because its truth has never been interpreted to us. The new spirit will not permit us to be intellectually idle: we are under obligation to explain ourselves and to demand explanation of others, till we can make ourselves mutually understood.

I have already expressed a doubt whether the Lambeth document has fully appreciated what is involved *for Christians generally* in this work of mutual interpretation; though it does definitely call upon its own people, on the one hand, to realize "the loyalty they owe to the universal Church and the charity and understanding which are required of the members of so inclusive a society,"[1] and, on the other hand, to "clear themselves of local sectional and temporary presuppositions and cultivate a sense of what is universal and genuinely catholic, in truth and in life.[2] But at least the Bishops have realized the obligation *resting upon themselves*, and so we find them in the Lambeth statements beginning to take account of the values in other systems, and beginning the attempt to make their own values

[1] Resolution XV, *Lambeth Report*, p. 13. [2] *Ibid.*

better understood. This they do by appeal to history, by explanation, and by argument deliberately addressed to the mind and conscience of groups other than their own.

2. *The Interdenominational Mind.*

The new spirit thus leads to a new mind upon matters of ancient dispute. It is a mind newly susceptible to historical argument: prepared, for example, to recognize in the evidence of the regenerative power of the Christian faith as it is held in the modern Free Churches the seal of the Spirit upon their past histories. It is a mind prepared to come out from the ramparts of traditional dogma and appeal to the conscience of to-day.

The best instance of this in the Lambeth document is the advocacy of episcopacy. The claim for the episcopate, as the one means of providing the Reunited Church with a duly authorized ministry, is submitted to the verdict of history and of present experience: it is not based merely upon traditional practice. The functions which the episcopate is intended to fulfil are stated, and its fitness to fulfil those functions in the future is submitted to the verdict of reason. We are thus taken on to ground where our minds can meet. The Bishops have the real courage of their convictions and show a Christian trust in the reasonableness of others when they venture thus to submit the institution of episcopacy to the test of explanation and argument. Moreover, it becomes evident, especially when we read the exposition of

the Lambeth proposals given jointly by the Bishops of Hereford, Peterborough and Zanzibar, that they are finding how to direct their explanation and their argument to the mind and conscience of Nonconformity. They do not try to carry their case by the sort of verbal *tour de force* which was the bane of past ecclesiastical argumentation, and which often scored its points by begging the questions at issue. Their appeal is not to ecclesiastical canons (which would be beside the point, because our ecclesiastical traditions are diverse). Neither is it to theological canons (which would also be precarious, because all theological statements being based upon analogy are necessarily a little inexact). The appeal is to what Free Churchmen would call spiritual canons, to Christian reason and spiritual understanding. Let any Free Churchmen read the chapter on "Bishops" in *Lambeth and Reunion*, and see if this is not the case. Both in judgment of other systems and in the exposition of their own, the Bishops are endeavouring to adopt that estimate of the facts which, by the illumination of the Spirit, God is discovered in history to have taken and to be taking in the life of to-day.

It is not for the sake of paying a compliment that I have said this, but in order to help to portray that inter-denominational mind which is for me the hope of the future. That mind is in fact simply the receptive, truth-loving mind, applying the facts supplied by history, and the criteria supplied by psychological observation, to the problem of our different religious usages. And it is right in treating the

questions at issue to treat them thus historically and psychologically. For in all such questions of religious experience and religious practice unqualified statements of principle cannot safely be made, but all statements must be tested and modified by experience. No principle or theory can rightly claim to occupy the whole of the ground. We have learned to recognize certain antinomies—freedom and discipline, continuity and growth, unity and diversity—and to know that both have to be regarded and that no single provision is adequate to secure both at once. Principles which have lived to sustain a standing quarrel with each other for generations are likely to be both true, and neither adequate. Each needs to be modified by the other in its application, and checked by the other when it claims too wide a sway. Moreover, we are coming to realize that the necessary adjustments between two rival principles must often be made in practice rather than in theory; or, at least, in practice first and in theory afterwards. However important it may be that our different theories should be corrected by each other, it is sometimes more immediately necessary that we should be compensated in practice for their several deficiencies. Some of our most cherished theories are true, indeed, fundamentally, but not true absolutely and without qualification, and the qualifications needed to make them true absolutely only history and experience can reveal.

It is therefore surely clear, to anyone who approaches the old controversies with the new mind, that no theory of Church government, or of the trans-

mission of grace, or of the obligation of any practice or any creed of the Church—in fact, no theory at all may be pressed to its logical extremes. None works out in practice quite as in theory it promises to do. None is true quite unconditionally. There are disturbing elements in the consciousness of different individuals and groups of Christians which in their case make the effect of a general provision quite different from its intention, perhaps even flatly contradictory in its result. Thus we may observe the Free Church rejection of forms of worship in favour of an apparently complete dependence upon the freedom of the Spirit, sometimes resulting in an unconscious slavery to a traditional procedure, or a dependence upon the thought-forms of a particular individual, all the more fatal because the danger is thought to be so far away. On the other hand, a blind belief in the efficacy of the appointed means of grace and of the acceptance of the orthodox creed may result in a total failure to understand or benefit by either. Looking back over long periods of history we can see that Quakerism has passed through periods of great deadness to the things of the Spirit of Christ, whilst episcopacy, just because of its usual efficiency, has been the instrument for perpetuating the worst religious errors of an age.

There is indeed a nemesis resting upon the adoption of any single principle as absolute that ought to be qualified by another. Over-emphasis leads in the long run to some reaction, if not to breakdown. We may take another instance from the traditional Free Church emphasis upon the fundamental importance

of a lively individual Christian experience. In treating of this matter a recent writer has said that, "It is doubtful whether the insistence upon a certain type of evangelical experience as a necessary preliminary to admission to Church membership has not helped to inhibit rather than to create that experience—so that what was supposed to be the condition of membership in the Free Churches is one that has become largely inoperative."[1] So, on the other hand, the Church theory which too greatly exalts the official priesthood as the sole channel of grace, and makes its laity mere dependents on what is officially provided for them, tends in the long run, and in countries where it is not checked by any vigorous manifestation of religious individualism, to quench the Spirit of God in laymen and priests alike.

It is curious, also, to notice how often in Church life one finds the paradox that what one Church most insists upon in theory, another best realizes in practice, at least in some points. Thus, for example, it is the Catholic rather than the Protestant who has most recognized the fact of individual vocation in the service of God, whilst it is the Protestant who has often done most to emphasize the duty of the individual to surrender his life wholly to the influences of Christian fellowship. If these things are possible, it becomes appropriate to re-examine the rival principles which underlie our rival policies in the light of their practical outworking, and to see whether, where the present application of a principle causes division, some new application may not be

[1] From the closing chapter of *Pathways to Christian Unity*, p. 203.

found which satisfies the *reason* of the principle without fulfilling the present letter.

3. *Interdenominational Experience.*

To-day, then, we have a new opportunity of mutual understanding and adaptation; whether or not we shall take it will depend upon the extent to which we make first-hand acquaintance with each other's practice and experience. The interdenominational *mind* will not be found without a great deal of interdenominational *experience*. It will come partly by conference, but not by conference alone; it will need spiritual contact at the deepest levels of united worship too. Nor will the contact of representative minds suffice to enable a few of the Church's spokesmen to explain the religious values of other communions to their own folk. The rank and file need the same spiritual contact and interchange. We must all share each other's experiences; not merely hear about them.

It is for this reason that the Student Christian Movement has done so much for Christian Unity. It has given men and women a taste of the religious experience they had been taught, if not actually to condemn, at least to pass by. As one who has gained much from that source, I desire to bear my testimony to the value of working side by side with members of other Churches in the work of that Movement. First in the daily life of the Oxford Inter-collegiate Christian Union, and then on the central executive of the national movement, I came to know my

spiritual kinship in unexpected circles and the incompleteness of my own tradition. I learned that those whom I had been taught to think of as "formalists" or "traditionalists" might be as well versed in the intimacies of individual Christian experience as my own people, as free and as quick to respond to the voice of truth. I have learned as much about "free prayer" from Anglicans as from Free Churchmen. I have found High Church colleges in which there was more of it than in the Free Church colleges visited in the same period. So I learned that different lines of communication may lead to the same spiritual fact and the same inner experiences. My fellow Christians and I might have much to exchange, but it was a barter on equal terms. I found I could feel spiritually at home in many different Christian circles. What I appreciated most deeply they could appreciate too: what they appreciated I could greatly appreciate also—at least, I could appreciate enough to be sure that the rest could not be alien to me once I could see its value as seen by them.

In the earlier days in Oxford we had not been trained to respect the ecclesiastical traditions which forbid intercommunion from the Anglican side, and we Free Churchmen were cordially welcomed to periodic joint communion services. So I was able to share in sacraments other than my own and learnt to lose the first acute consciousness of external differences in the consciousness of spiritual oneness. Later, when the stricter churchmanship of the Catholics came to be asserted in the Movement, it was still possible to be present though not to participate. So

one was given an experience of new modes of communion with God in Christ.

But I have had still better opportunities of finding my way to the inside of the Catholic means of grace, by living in the closest of all possible intimacies with one who has been first a Protestant and then a Catholic, and so sharing in the intimate thoughts and experiences of such a time of transition. One learns by such experience to inhibit now and then the instinctive criticism which one's traditional principles would suggest, to be quiet and look on till one had seen the outcome of some religious practice, and caught the proper angle of approach to some unfamiliar setting of the truth. So love gave the key to an understanding which logic could never have reached, and the rationalizing of the business followed afterwards.

With such an interdenominational experience it is not difficult to acquire an interdenominational mind. If only other people could have their own opportunities of seeing and testing the like for themselves progress would be swift. But there are obstacles to this happening rapidly, and it may therefore be of use if I try to set out in an orderly statement the things which I personally have learned to appreciate, and to believe that others also might appreciate in this quarter and in that. There is room for all that I have to speak about in neither the Catholic *theory* nor in the Free Church *theory*, as I have heard these expounded. But there is room for it all in Christian *experience*, whether its bias be evangelical or institutional.

CHAPTER V.

Essential Values in Christian Experience.

1. *Free Church Values.*

IN writing of Free Church values I write of things which are so deeply ingrained in me that it is not easy to be detached, so as to be quite sure that what I describe are the most essential and distinctive marks of the Free Churchman, or that they will seem to the onlooker to be so. But I think that they are distinctive, and that they are also essential and, therefore, that the Catholic will appreciate them too; though his system, in our view, fails to conserve them sufficiently.

(*a*) The first thing that we Free Churchmen stand for is *the value of the individual soul.* It is not only that each one is infinitely precious, but that each is quite separate and distinct and glorious in his distinctiveness. However much he may conform to an average type and depend upon the sustenance of the whole body of Christians, he is himself essentially unique. He is not only a participator in the universal quality of sonship, not only a recipient of the universal Christian grace, he is a son in his own right. He has his own peculiar consciousness of God, his own special transactions with God. He has

his own immediacy of contact with God, his own special revelations of truth and duty, his own particular course of growth into the fulness of Christ. He ought to be strictly original in his religious experience, and up to a point an originator, since God puts forth His particular creative energy in each separate soul. He can, therefore, never be wholly subject to general laws, wholly bound by average traditions, he must have his own citadel of complete freedom. In particular his apprehension of God must be absolutely and completely his own. Nothing can be mediated to him entirely from without. He is and he possesses only that which he has made his own and apprehended of himself. Hence the inadequacy, the offence, of any system which seems to set out to make him, either in creed or conduct, wholly conformable to any conceivable type. It can only be done by suppressing the divine spark in him, sacrificing the substance of personality for the shadow. If the choice must be made it is more important that the soul should be itself and alive than that it should be a mere replica of what is normal and correct.

We, therefore, require of any system that sets out to embrace us all, that it should leave room for individual varieties—even vagaries, if you will. We stand by the Quakers: there must be an honourable place for them. I hold no particular brief for the Quakers myself. It is fashionable to praise them for their sincerity and their good works. But they have the defects of their good qualities, like the rest of us. Their ultra-individualism makes itself felt in their inability to appreciate the work of the Spirit

in most other people, and also in their difficulty in finding the self-suppression and therewith the loyalty necessary for good team work. But till the Church finds room for the ultra-individualists in its own system, they will remain in their present fatal isolation; and Free Churchmen in general will, I think, have to stand by them, and so "bear the infirmities of the weak." The Church may express censure for the idiosyncrasies of its extremists, but it must not cast them out.

(*b*) *We stand likewise for the spiritual value of the Christian group.* Those who live a common life "in the name of Christ" acquire a peculiar Christian experience of their own. It is a valid experience of Christ. It is, in its own proportion and degree, an authoritative experience of Christ. That is to say, it has a right to be heard and regarded. Its right is not a matter of private privilege to be safeguarded by it in its own interest. It is to the interest of the whole that its distinctive gift should not be lost. Each particular grouping of Christian people has some power of useful origination on behalf of the whole Church, exceeding the power of the individuals who compose it. Each has its own distinctive ability to initiate modes of conduct suitable to the hour, if not so commonly to strike out successfully distinctive modes of thought. And this power of origination is precious because it is in its measure unique.

It is, of course, quite true that when these individual and group values come to be correlated with other individual and group values, need arises for curbing excesses and defining standards which must

greatly circumscribe the limits within which each can justly claim its independency. It is also true, in my view, that the independent principle has never shown itself able in practice to constitute a true spiritual whole with all the necessary parts in it fitly framed together. But the group status is none the less real and valid, and it is interesting to watch how Anglicanism is coming to recognize this in its efforts to limit the jurisdiction of bishops, patrons and others with hereditary powers. The Church deprives itself of a tremendous engine of progress, an all but omnipotent dynamo for generating consecrated personality, if it neglects to foster this characteristic power of the separate group.

(*c*) Thirdly, as against the claim of credal regulations to keep the Christian community in the true faith, we assert *the greater value of a prophetic and a Biblical tradition.*[1] The truth of Christ is not to be expressed in any formulæ. It is expressed in inspired lives. Of course, inspired Christians write and speak, as well as act and pray, and their inspiration is in all that they do. But the inspiration is plenary only when the act and word is seen in the living setting in which it arose. Hence we say to our teachers: "Here in the New Testament is the narrative of Christ and His apostles. Here in the Old Testament is the history that led up to Him. Here, too, in scattered story and voluminous literature is the record of what He has inspired men to be and to do "in His Name." Steep your heart and mind in it and then speak to us of what you

[1] See *Pathways to Christian Unity*, Chapter IV.

have seen. Speak freely, graphically, imaginatively. Speak as the first Christians wrote and spoke. And through your speech, with your own kindled personality glowing in it, the word of the Spirit will be brought to our understanding. We, too, shall be brought into the presence of Christ and shall see Him as the Desire of all ages. It will not supremely matter if your teaching is disproportionate, or even in part erroneous. If the Spirit of God moves you, we, too, shall be moved by the same Spirit, and Christ Himself will be born in us.

Of course this view needs pruning, but there is living truth in it, and we Free Churchmen must attest it. We cannot suffer the supremacy of inspired personality as the chief vehicle of Christian grace to be impugned by any exaltation of creeds or formulæ, or traditionally ordered ceremonies and rites. Creeds and traditions have their place, and we would not deny them their importance; but the fact of the Incarnation stands witness to the truth we hold, that living personality is the only adequate vehicle for the full revelation of God. The necessity that brought God to birth in Jesus at Bethlehem in order that He might first reveal Himself to man requires that He clothe Himself continuously in a succession of personalities in whom Jesus is revealed anew all down the ages.

2. *Catholic Values in Experience.*

Though thinking all these things ardently, I have yet found in experience values in the traditional emphasis upon creeds and rites and institutional rules

and order which seem to me to be complementary, and not contradictory, to any Free Church values; and these I shall now try to describe. If to the Catholic my description of what I have found in Catholicism seems poor and superficial, I ask him not on that account to deride it. It may be along the same lines that other minds that have been trained like mine will come presently into his inner sanctuaries. And I can assure him that, though words may fail me, I have been there myself.

(*a*) In the first place, I have found in *the Catholic emphasis upon what is common and universal* a great source of peace and steadiness. My egotism would lead me to make too much of the bit of me which is different from the rest of the world. That differentiating quality, or attitude, which constitutes me different from others of my family and nation may indeed be an irreplaceable value. But my sanity depends upon my realizing its very small proportion to the whole. And, similarly, that which is peculiar to my generation needs to find its place in the perspective of the centuries. A fixed tradition of worship (habitual or occasional) helps to give each worshipper a consciousness that is more representative of the whole experience and knowledge of all Christian people than if the expression of worship is always wholly free. Just as, in experience generally, our particular consciousness is only the outcrop from a larger submerged consciousness which is our share in the experience of the race, so in traditional worship the provided vehicles of expression immerse one in an ocean of God-consciousness, on the sur-

face of which one's own ripples of special thought and desire can play. Originality is not lost thereby: it is steadied and correlated with what is common and universal. Its expression, when it finds it through such discipline, is all the more effective.

It is one of the evils alleged against the "Catholic" system that it makes the individual Christian too much dependent upon a priest as his medium of communication with God. With that theoretic danger I agree, and I have known cases in which it was certainly so; but it is to me a curious paradox of the situation that I know no mode of worship in which I am now less obstructed by the media than the Anglican celebration of the Eucharist. The different elements in the service so tone in with one another that each produces its effect without calling attention to itself, whereas in the simpler symbolism of a Congregational communion service each item stands out stark and insistent, because of its singularity. Moreover the ministrant, in the Catholic modes of worship, because he does nothing unexpected, is less apt to intrude his own individual idiosyncrasies between my soul and God. There is no service in which I can so count upon being brought face to face with Christ Himself, with no distraction to break the intensity of my communion. There is none in which Christ is at once so great and so near, so much the universal Saviour of all men and the Saviour of my own individual soul.

(*b*) In the next place, *the credal tradition*, interpreted not too rigidly, seems to me to allow to the modern a combination of freedom with anchorage

which is particularly useful. If creeds are regarded as literal and adequate transcripts of the truth, they must be an intolerable bondage. But if they are just not quite that, but are admitted to contain an element of bold symbolism, they hold the mind to certain broad bearings in a way that is most valuable at a time when thought is (as usual) in transition. I find in practice that Anglicans in large numbers of cases can keep their freedom in combination with a kind of steadiness of thought which seems less easy to Free Churchmen. I am apt, as a Free Churchman, to spend too much of my time watching for slight movements in my religious landmarks, and adjusting my expression of the truth to the passing discoveries of the hour. The time spent in reformulation might be more profitably spent in direct grappling with fresh knowledge and fresh tasks—taking the old statements roughly and provisionally for granted, without too much question. There are obvious perils in this: but it has strong psychological justification too.

The value of an approximate, symbolic and traditional expression for truth is particularly marked at a time, like this, when the main intellectual interest of the day is practical. The task of the Christian thinker lies, or should lie at the moment, in the correlation of theological first principles with social and political first principles, and in the working out of a Christian economics and a Christian politics. But, so far, there is very little permanent and assured result of thought in those spheres, certainly not enough for the mind's safe anchorage. At such a time it is

of real advantage to let the more abstract formulation of Christian truth stand as it is, as a focus for religious meditation, whilst the intellectual energy of the originative minds of the day is thrown with full force into the opening up of these less developed subjects of Christian inquiry. These will presently find their place in the larger body of Christian doctrine. Meantime health and vigour of mind and spirit are not best served by a too meticulous examination of the truth which the ages has in the main attested; they are best served by a generous acceptance and use of the gifts of thought inherited from the past, coupled with a strenuous grappling with the tasks of thought which await us in the present. We may find Christ truly in either of these exercises and only fully in both.

(*c*) And, finally, I feel the value of *the ministerial tradition* which puts upon the official representatives of the Church a great responsibility for the preservation of all that is common and precious in the thought and practice of the past, and magnifies their duty to maintain the cohesion and unity of the Body of Christ. The sense of responsibility felt by "Catholic" ministers is indeed, in my view, too much restricted to what is old and average, and too careless of what is new and unique in its promise for days to come. It is too much tied to a fixed tradition; but it cannot be too strongly felt or too seriously regarded.

Moreover, the forms which surround the ordination of the "Catholic" ministry seem well suited to hand on this sense of responsibility. Thus,

I find the emphasis upon an episcopally ordered ministry psychologically congruous with the "Catholic" emphasis upon what is common and universal in human experience, and upon the value of traditional formulation in creed and rite; so that it is difficult to imagine the one without the other.

At the same time, I find in episcopacy a method of carrying the responsibility of Church government —which must be carried by someone, however well it may be to limit its amount—in some ways more akin with the Christian spirit, in its actual working out, than our more democratic Free Church procedure. It results in the government of the Church being far more personal, less subject to the deflection of policy due to impassioned eloquence, or other such perversions of popular procedure. The Bishop may be a mere lawyer or an unworthy princeling; but he may be a Father-in-God. There are indeed many Fatherly duties which need to be performed in the Church, and it is more possible to vest them in a man than in an Assembly. We Free Churchmen have, indeed, made changes in our Church organization recently by which we have recognized the value of episcopal procedure, but we shall need to take more kindly to the idea of authority, and of its being rightly and continuously vested in certain individuals, if we are ever to give to our appointed leaders the dignity, the affection, and the humble service they need to enable them to fulfil the function of Christian oversight. Episcopacy without qualification is, in my view, quite unchristian and untrustworthy; but equally do I think that Church government with-

out an element of episcopal authority is as defective in theory as it has proved to be unsatisfactory in use.

I write, perhaps, too much as an Independent in my religious origin, and with too little consciousness of the value of the middle way in Church Government represented by Presbyterianism. But not even is Presbyterianism, in my view, capable of so fine a blending of local personal instrumentality with a sense of universal responsibility and commission linking each local congregation consciously with all the world in all the ages.

CHAPTER VI.

Creeds and their Purpose.

THE Bishops have expressed their belief "that the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the whole-hearted acceptance of:

> "The Holy Scriptures, as the record of God's revelation of Himself to man, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith; and the Creed commonly called Nicene, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith, and either it or the Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal Confession of belief."[1]

Our Free Church spokesmen have said in reply that, "In the relation of the Church to the Creeds there need be little difficulty. We recognize that the reunited Church will require some common declaration of faith, not to be used as a test, but to be a testimony and witness to the Lord and the Gospel. Here we fully realize the value of the ancient creeds. . . . Free Churchmen generally would be able to give as 'whole-hearted' an acceptance to the Christian faith underlying these creeds as do their Anglican brethren; while as to the Nicene Creed in particular, such Free Churchmen as are acquainted with

[1] Two other paragraphs follow, enumerating further requisite agreements concerning Sacraments and Orders.

the history of doctrinal development in the fourth century can recognize in it 'a sufficient statement of the Christian faith' expressed in the terms of the thought of that age." The "Declaratory Statement of Common Faith and Practice" issued as the basis of the Federal Union of the Evangelical Free Churches is called as witness to these statements. The reference concludes with an emphasis upon the fact "that truth is ever learning new language, so that terms and modes of thought grow old, and, when they have grown old, easily misinterpret and mislead."

Here, then, is a large measure of agreement, though with a difference of emphasis. The agreement is probably almost complete as to the historical validity of the creeds, nor would there be likely to be much disagreement as to the need for their modern interpretation, and as to the principles by which such interpretation should be governed. Fuller statements would, however, be likely to reveal differences regarding the practical steps which ought to be taken to make the creeds regulative in the thought of the Church's ministers and members, and the degree to which there should be licence granted to individuals who find it difficult to conform to the uses generally prescribed. In other words, our differences are not so much with regard to the content of the creeds and the purpose for which they exist, as to the uses that we make of them. But this surely is a matter for an appeal to psychological investigation to see what methods are, in actual experience, found best calculated to realize their intended purpose, and with-

in what limits human minds are average enough to accept a common discipline. If this be so it will be well to begin by considering what is the purpose that credal standards have in view.

The purpose of creeds is surely to secure in all members of the Church, and especially in its ministers, an apprehension of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as true as possible to the revelation we have had in Christ, as free as possible from erroneous interpretation, and as rich as possible in positive spiritual content. Such an apprehension of God should be true to the facts of New Testament history; it should be careful to avoid the bypaths of interpretation which have been proved to lead men away from the Christian view of God; and it should be inspired by the great wealth of Christian thought and experience which has been gathered by the Church in past ages. All this, moreover, should be made living in the mind and heart of each individual Christian. It should be realized that the body of Christian truth is valuable, not in so far as it is kept intact and apart from other truth, but in so far as it is apprehended in living relation with all other knowledge and experience.

Now, when the purpose of creeds is stated in broad terms like these, it is evident at once that the use of credal standards is, at the best, only one imperfect method of attaining the desired result, and neither a complete method nor an unerring method. Credal standards are serviceable indeed in precluding errors in matters of fact, and in labelling certain avenues of thought as promising and others as dangerous.

But they cannot secure that those who accept the true facts see their true significance, nor that those who advance along orthodox avenues of thought find their hearts inspired by the faith in its depth and fulness. Creeds cannot secure either orthodoxy of heart or unity of emphasis. Do the historic creeds secure such orthodoxy or such unity in the minds, for example, of the Anglican clergy? Or do the priests of the Eastern Churches and the priests of the Church of England think substantially alike on all the most vital of Christian doctrines? No one would assert the affirmative in answer to these questions. Especially at the points where Christian doctrine weds a man's general philosophy of life, and gives being to the practical ideals by which he is really inspired and guided, there is no guarantee that the orthodoxy of the parent theological conceptions will secure an offspring of working Christian ideas.

The exaltation of credal standards tends always to overlook the essential inadequacy of intellectual statement. "Thought is always in arrears to life, and language is always in arrears to thought." All language is essentially symbolic and approximate. To forget this is to mistake the shadow for the substance. It leads to neglect of the fundamental importance of the way in which any statement is "apperceived." No intellectual formula has worth in itself and apart from the particular kind of reception that the mind gives to it. Let me illustrate with a fact from the field of religious education which bears closely on this point. Anglican educators are growing increasingly strong and united on the point that catechetical

teaching in particular, and dogmatic teaching in general, have little effect on the minds of young children except to give them a repulsion for God and a view of Christian doctrine which makes it discontinuous with the rest of their ideas. This defect in regard to children does not, of course, prove the unsuitability of the same subject matter for adults, though indeed there are plenty of child minds among the members (and ministers) of our Churches. But at least the point is made good that the effect of any use of dogma must be judged in relation to the way in which it will be mentally assimilated, or not assimilated, as the case may be.

A further limitation of the value of credal standards is that they tend to include too little and to exclude too much of what is true to the experience and understanding of Christian people. To begin with, most heresy has a positive point, and the truth is not expressed by a total denial of the heretical position, but by a broad disavowal of its sufficiency and a repudiation of some of its particular implications. But it is always possible that in ages subsequent to the age in which any particular heresy arose there will be other Christians born who can grasp the substantial truth of the Christian revelation better in terms of the old heresy than in the more strictly adequate and generally useful terms of the orthodox faith. Again, credal standards tend unduly to narrow the circle of Christian interest. They narrow it, to begin with, to Pre-Reformation, and mainly to Pre-Augustinian, thought and piety ; whereas it is hardly disputable that the thinking of the Church, with re-

gard, for example, to the Holy Spirit, has been much more fertile since the Reformation than before it. So, again, they tend to leave out of account great tracts of Christian thought and practice merely because these have never been the subject of acute disagreement; for it was disagreement that led to most of our credal definitions.

In saying all this, I would not for a moment be thought to belittle the value of the creeds as a focus either for Christian theology or for Christian meditation. For myself, for example, I would use the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed in every communion service. I merely wish to insist upon their strictly conditional and limited value, and on the consequent need to supplement and check their use by the use of other methods for gaining the purpose for which they are intended.

The method by which the Free Churches have, in general, tried to secure a true catholicity of Christian thought and experience has been through the solid education of their ministries in the history of Christian thought, and through the full and constant exposition of the Scriptures.[1] And one may claim that broadly speaking the method has worked as well as any other. There are, no doubt, sections of the Free Churches which are insufficiently alive to the importance of the mental discipline in theology which is necessary to equip a Christian minister. The same is true of the Church of England. No doubt also, the Free Churches have had their historic bias toward certain aspects of the truth, and away from cer-

[1] See *Pathways to Christian Unity*, Chapter IV.

tain others. But no one will assert that the place assigned to creeds has proved a sufficient safeguard against the like lack of catholicity in Anglican circles. It is interesting and instructive to find that when the Free Churches do attempt (for their own purposes) a general formal statement of the Faith and Practice common among them, that statement is recognized on the Anglican side, by men of such weight as Doctor Gore (then Bishop of Oxford), the Bishop of Winchester, and the former Bishop of Bath and Wells, as proving substantial agreement in matters of doctrine with the Church of England.[1] The way in which the Congregational Churches have steadied down again, after a passing ebullition of "new theology" as it was styled when the penny papers took it up in the early years of the present century, shows from another angle the power of a body with no defined standards, and no other anchorage than a general loyalty to the Christian scholarship and Christian experience of all the ages, both to tolerate and to recover quickly from a temporary over-emphasis of modernist ideas.

Safety lies surely not in any single method of securing conformity to the historic standards of Christian truth, but in a combination of methods which between them would make up a full and sound system of Christian education. "The only final safeguard of the living system of Christian truth is systematic and vital teaching. It is equally the safeguard

[1] See the manifesto of the joint sub-committee on Faith and Order which proclaimed this identity in 1918, and was signed by those named and other Anglican theologians of standing.

against the disintegrating heresy which is the bugbear of the Catholic, and against the inert and sterile orthodoxy which is the bane of the Protestant Free Churchman. . . . Heresy and formalism both spring from insufficient reflection upon the fundamentals of the Faith. Creeds may curb and check too rank originality for a time; the absence of creeds may stimulate originality where it flags; but only the give-and-take of sympathetic teaching and discussion can bring harmony "[1]—and, with it, we may add, catholicity and unity.

In a true system of education four points should be secured. There should be (1) catholicity of syllabus; (2) orthodoxy of comment; (3) relevancy of application, and (4) stimulus to the self activity of the learner. It is the fourth point that the Free Churchman has cared about most, though not sufficiently according to modern standards. It is the first and second that have been most guarded by the traditionalists, though perhaps in some ways the Free Churchman has sometimes stood for a wider catholicity of Christian experience in the subject matter of Christian teaching than the "Catholic" so called. But it is doubtful whether any one of us has given the necessary attention to the third of the points which I have named, the relevancy of application. It may well be that this is the particular point needing emphasis to-day to give completeness and force to our system of education in Catholic Christianity, and to bring us properly together.

The possibility of holding orthodox opinions

[1] *Pathways to Christian Unity*, p. 63.

without attaching any true meaning to them, has already been remarked. This may show itself in different ways. There are some who suffer from such a complete insensitiveness and lack of imagination, that their religious faith, though firmly professed yet adds no warmth or colour to their experiences and gives them no real interpretation of duty or destiny. There are others whose lives are indeed interpreted in terms of their faith, but only up to a certain point. Probably, with all of us, there is an inevitable gradation in our consciousness from the thoughts and purposes which are saturated with our fundamental beliefs to other thoughts and purposes at present only slightly tinged with them. It is probably true also that there is always some particular field of consciousness on which the crucial battle of faith or non-faith is fought out—probably some field of thought or action which it is the task of our generation to bring more thoroughly within the sway of Christian principles. How far the Christian faith will be a living reality to us depends upon how far we will allow it to govern our thinking and mould our purposes just there.

Now there can be no doubt that at the present time the crucial question for Christianity is its message for the social life of the times. This does not mean that its message for the individual life is, in the long run, less important, or deserving of less attention, or secondary in any other way. It is simply that the consciousness of moral and spiritual need is at the moment so specially acute in connection with the problems of social progress, that unless the

cogency and the power of Christianity is asserted at that point, a sense of partial defeat and unreality steals into all the rest of men's religious thinking. Their souls lose sincerity. Their single-mindedness is destroyed.

It may be, then, at this moment, less important to defend any single article of the Nicene Creed from sceptical attack than to insist that the creed as a whole should govern our hopes and form our purposes for the whole of life. Far better lose a hand or an eye from the faith than that the whole body of it should be cast into the limbo of irrelevancy. But we need not insist upon the principle any further. The point of importance for those who desire that the Catholic faith should be held in its completeness and in its livingness is this. They must recognize that the faith can only be received in truth by those who purpose to be governed by it in the whole of their social outlook, and in all their social action. Our true faith is revealed by our ruling purposes far more than by our nominal beliefs, and we are saved by the truth to which we commit ourselves in action far more than by that to which we commit ourselves in speech. It may well be that to-day the Church will best create that unity of understanding in the faith which is the purpose of creeds, by enlisting its members in a fresh investigation of the significance of the creeds for the social life of our time.

CHAPTER VII.

Sacraments and their Efficacy.

IN speaking of Sacraments, the Bishops have expressed their belief that "the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the whole-hearted acceptance of . . . the divinely instituted sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole fellowship in and with Christ." There is a tacit acceptance of this statement in the reply of the Free Church spokesmen, who pass it by except for a parenthetic remark assuming that the liberty with regard to forms of worship allowed to different groups in the Lambeth scheme "would extend to the practice of some amongst us as regards the subjects of Baptism." I presume that a corresponding concession would be claimed for the Quakers. The principle of Sacraments is, then, accepted pretty fully, except in so far as it is bound up with questions concerning the authority of their administrants.[1]

But whilst there is this surface agreement on the subject of sacraments, there are, beneath, deep differences of thought which should be probed. There

[1] These questions, of course, present the greatest difficulty in the whole proposal. See chapters VIII and XI.

is a danger lest we should adopt as a cornerstone in the new edifice a stone of very little worth, which might crumble to nothing at a touch. It is perhaps as well for the solidity of the future structure that we have the Quakers to compel us to face the question whether any sacraments are absolutely and in all cases essential to a Christian life, and that the question of ordination also will require us to compare our respective theories of the way in which the sacraments convey their benefit.

There are, of course, extant theories of sacramental processes which could not possibly be accepted as a basis of agreement. The kind of theory which Free Churchmen are bound to resist is the one which, in its extremist form, is able to attach supreme value to the sprinkling of crowds of uninstructed people with holy water accompanied only by the use of the baptismal formula. As against this sort of view, we are bound to insist that no formal act can have supreme value of itself: its value will depend upon the degree to which it is borne out and substantiated by the concurrent activity of the persons and communities responsible for it. If it is the formal expression of their vital faith and purpose, it will be so accompanied. If it is not, that is almost tantamount to proof that the formal act was a mere formality, empty and futile.

Some degree of assent to the strictly conditional character of the efficacy of all formal religious action might possibly be assumed to-day from any representative theologian. The trouble is that the popular presentation of the matter is less explicit—through

fear of dissipating the faith of simple-minded people who would, it is said, be troubled if any doubt were cast upon the all but automatic efficacy of these means of grace. At least enough qualification of the high theory of objective sacramental efficacy must, however, be made to allow for such variations of practice as the formal recognition of the Quakers will require, and we need, therefore, to arrive at some reasoned psychological theory of the matter corresponding with this necessary latitude in practice. It will not suffice to leave unexpressed the qualification which truth, by general consent, demands.

To bring out what I take to be the due correspondence of religious forms with the facts which they are intended to express, let me deal with the subject of Baptism. Baptism, I take it, is the sign of admission into the Christian society. Its formula is not intended to have the power of a magic talisman. It is a short symbol of the Christian creed. Its use means that the baptised is admitted into a society where he will be under continuous Christian influences. But the creed itself is only a shorthand version of the faith, fuller than the baptismal formula, but still only a summary. The Faith is only fully expressed in the sum of the lives of all Christian people, of all times and places. It is but epitomized in their common religious gatherings and ceremonies. Baptism is meant to be the effective admission into a society which will effectively immerse the life so received into the glorious truths and experiences of the Christian religion. The higher in this sense the view of the ceremony itself, the

greater should be the emphasis upon the steps taken afterwards to make good its promise in actual fact.

Suppose, however, that the correct formula is used, but the actual result intended is not achieved, and that consequently there is no effective membership in the Christian Society. What then? We are surely in slippery places, on the verge of the abyss of unreality and falsehood and near to the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit, if we say that it makes no substantial difference, thereby dissociating the symbol from the fact and making the one efficacious without the other. The effect surely is regulated not by the correctness of the formula, or the aptness of the symbol, but by the living meaning which is given to the act as a whole in the thought and in the life of the institution using it. If that form represents a truth in life, a real desire and a practical readiness to make good what it symbolizes, the form itself, I find, acquires a general efficacy of strictly amazing power, outstripping anything which *a priori* one would have thought possible. But if the form is dissociated from what subsequently follows, and made efficacious in its mere performance, the result is, in fact, disastrous. On the other hand, applying this principle in another direction, I should hold that the Quaker child of to-day is in point of fact and reality quite commonly, though without the act of formal baptism, received into the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is more truly made a member of Christ's Church—though not by baptism—than many of the children of ungodly Episcopalians, baptized by conventional

clergymen. By whatever test of experience you can apply, the unbaptized Quaker is brought nearer to Christ—in thought, in character, in disposition, in manifold and effective conscious and subconscious influences.

If it were granted that the act of baptism is constituted not by the momentary formal act of the Church, but by the continuous and many-sided influences which the formal act concentrates in one intense symbolic moment, then we could work together to make both the ceremony and the sequel full and significant. As it is, we none of us seem to have a theory which makes enough of both the rite and its responsibilities, and which clearly relates the two. The extremists, who hold their half of the truth with great intensity, very often care so deeply for the realities of the situation that in practice they make up for the deficiencies of their theories. Thus the "Catholic" theorists who hold the most supernatural views of the efficacy of baptismal regeneration are often the most ardent in keeping the baptized within the Christian fold. Their theory is not allowed to depress their practice. But the average Christian communion—Free Church or Episcopalian—combines with the rite of baptism a half-hearted faith in its efficacy to secure some unknown benefits (beyond the reach of psychological analysis) which yet it does not believe will be withheld if baptism is omitted. The total effect of the common teaching and practice of baptism upon the popular mind, both outside the Church and on the fringe of its own adherents, is to give a thoroughly false impression of what

Christianity stands for, tending to degrade it to the primitive level of African fetish worship.

If these things are so, there is need for a fresh combined approach, along the lines of psychological inquiry, to the whole question of sacramental processes. It would greatly help us in the more difficult discussions which are to come, concerning the authorization needed by ministers of the sacraments, if we had first reached some common ground about the processes by which sacramental benefit is, in experience, received. Such agreement would probably not be anything like complete, but it would probably be complete enough to enable us each to respect each other's consciences where we differed, with a much better conscience in doing so than we can now. For it would probably show that each side attaches real value, though not the same value, to the spiritual values which the other most accentuates.

So far I have said nothing about the sacrament of Holy Communion. But here, too, it is necessary to submit that the effect of the sacrament is not independent of the conditions which surround its administration and reception. Catholic theory, as I understand it, recognizes fully the possibility that the recipient may partake without spiritual benefit, and even with spiritual harm. It was not only the Corinthians who partook of the body and blood of Christ to their damnation. But in order to safeguard the individual from any nervous fears lest the sacrament should not be efficacious on the side of its administration, Catholic doctrine has seemed to establish a theory of sacramental efficiency of an almost mechani-

cal rigidity, dissociating it in particular, to the scandal of the Free Churchman, from the character of the administrant.[1] By this attempt to guarantee the objective value of any duly authorized sacrament against accidental defects, Catholicism has developed a theory which seems to make the supreme gift of God to man independent of psychological processes and moral values, and so to subvert the whole principle of the Incarnation. For the Incarnation surely means, above all things, that God could only convey His life to man through the medium of personality.

Now, it seems to me that there is in this matter a reconciliation between the Catholic and the Protestant emphasis, along the lines of a psychological approach, an appeal to experience. Take, for example, the point of acute difference just cited. Here psychological observation would suggest that the precise character of the ministrant would not interfere with the effect of a sacrament in a system which reduced its reliance upon the individuality of the ministrant at that point to a minimum, half so much as it would in a system which put the ministrant into individual prominence. But this would not be the only point reached. Psychologically it is evident that when the part of the ministrant is subdued, it is in order that other influences may be more prominent. It becomes, indeed, pretty clear upon examination, that the psychological effect of a sacramental rite upon

[1] No one would, of course, deny that there may be defects of character, in either a priest or a preacher, which will not impair the value of his ministry in a particular ceremony or sermon: but we ought rather to think of the influence of notoriously bad character on a continuous ministry.

those who give themselves freely to it, is to subject them to the effective influence of a chosen group of Christian influences dramatically grouped and presented. The worshippers are placed under the influences not of any particular presentation of the Gospel, but of the Gospel as a whole, as it is held in that particular Church and embodied in that particular rite. As against the Free Church critic of ritual and ceremonial, I am prepared to maintain, with certain High Churchmen to whom I have listened, that the influences conveyed through the speech and acts of the ministrant and the congregation are essentially not mechanical and magical but personal and psychological in their operation.[1] They give recurrent power to the personal forces which have operated in the same service in times past, in the ministrant and in the worshipping congregation. They are not less "personal" than the influences exerted by a preacher, though they are less tied to the particular individuality of any single person. But they are personal. They are the outcome of personal vision, personal faith, personal obedience, personal devotion to Christ —the personal religion of the multitude of one's fellow-Christians. Though freer from the peculiar bias of any individual than are our Free Church forms of worship, they are not independent of the personal experience and understanding of the group of people whose experience and understanding they embody.

[1] I am aware that the early Catholic expositions of sacramental theory are not of this kind, but that is easily accounted for in a pre-psychological age.

It follows that the sacramental rite of any particular Church conveys, indeed, the spirit of Christ to the recipient, but not without any admixture of other influences. For good and evil, the sacraments of a Church convey to its recipients in general, something of the spirit of the institution itself. So far as this is Christian, well. So far as it falls short of being Christian, the effect of that deficiency will tell. Experience will bear out this point. Assiduous use of the means of grace does not tend simply to holiness: it tends at the same time to the reproduction of the defects of one or another of our different "schools" of thought. We can most of us see this in the case of any "school" but our own, and in some cases it is glaring.

There is, in the recognition of this fact, a certain shock to our sense of direct dependence upon Christ and of immediate communion with Him. But there is also a gain in bringing our sacramental experience into line with our experience at large. Nowhere in life do we find ourselves subject to influences which are not coloured by human association and marred by human weakness. All our treasures are in earthly vessels. There are no infallibilities, no unconditional processes from one end of the world to the other. We are children of the earth, of special parentage and nationality, and our spiritual parentage also is coloured by local and racial facts. And yet, in and through it all, we are never out of the reach of the direct touch of God, never beyond immediate sight and hearing of Him. Though every separate vessel in which we seek to contain His grace

should be defective, He will never fail to use them to the blessing of our souls. Through imperfect channels He will come to us and give us, not His bounty only, but His very Self.

CHAPTER VIII.

Orders and their Value.

ON no point are the Bishops more tentative in their phrasing than in their remarks upon Episcopacy as the "one means of providing a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body." Not that they doubt their conclusion for a moment; but they desire to maintain it on grounds of reason and experience rather than on grounds of tradition and dogma. Episcopacy is "submitted . . . on considerations of history and of present experience as the best instrument for maintaining the unity and continuity of the Church."

This is well, because the traditional claim for the episcopate is somewhat vitiated by the fact that, though the episcopate has been maintained throughout the centuries, it has not been maintained in the form and manner which the Bishops themselves now recognize as right and proper. They have now, as they say, to seek that in the future "the office of a bishop should everywhere be exercised in a representative and constitutional manner, and more truly express all that ought to be involved for the life of the Christian Family in the title of Father-in-God."

Some irregularity or incompleteness in the way in which the office has been exercised in the past is here admitted as from a very early date. If we were any longer discussing the old question whether any particular orders were "valid," it would be appropriate to insist that the claim to validity must rest upon a complete conformity to the standard. "Valid" orders should surely be exercised, and have been exercised and transmitted, in a representative and constitutional manner and not merely by episcopal transmission.

The Bishops, however, do not invite us to reopen this question, which always seemed to Free Churchmen to be somewhat incongruous with the general spirit of Christianity; but, unfortunately, they put forward a corollary to their episcopal theorem which carries us back on to much the same ground. They would make it necessary for Christian ministers who have never received episcopal ordination to receive the same before being recognized as ministers of the reunited Church. This presents episcopacy once more to Free Church minds as a kind of arbitrary and rather incongruous condition, limiting the operations of the Spirit of God within fixed channels; and it draws forth from our Free Church spokesmen in their Reply a demand to know whether such episcopal ordination is intended simply to extend to wider circles a power of ministry already exercised in narrower circles, or whether it is intended to convey a new power or quality of ministry not hitherto possessed. In leading up to this pointed challenge to the "indispensableness of episcopal ordination," our Free

Church spokesmen make the following preliminary remark. "Of episcopacy as a form of polity," they say, "we need say only a word. We have indicated that our view of the Gospel and the Church keeps us from regarding any one form of polity as essential in the Church Catholic, or in any true part of it. We hold, as leading Anglican scholars also hold, that no one form of polity for the Church has been prescribed by the Lord. For this very reason we are the more free to consider what form may be shown to us by the leading of the Spirit as expedient for a reunited Church,—and we, therefore, have an open mind towards episcopal order as towards any other. To this, however, we must add that we cannot be expected to consider any form of polity which claims to be an exclusive channel of grace or which fails to recognize the place and the rights of the Christian people in the affairs of the Church."

Now here, I submit, that the issue is hopelessly tangled and irrevocably locked, so long as we separate the question of epsicopacy considered as a satisfactory form of Church polity from the question of episcopacy considered as a means of securing the transmission of grace. Episcopacy is, in my view, a guarantee of the operation of grace in the corporate thought and action of the Church, because it is, and in so far as it is, the means of securing the unity and continuity of the Church's life, and such, indeed, was its original historic purpose.[1] May we not, for a

[1] Cf. *The People of God*, Part II, by Hamilton, and *Essays on the Early History of the Church and Ministry*, edited by Dr. H. B. Swete.

year or two at least, defer the questions on which we are now hopelessly at loggerheads (questions as between a given Anglican Bishop and a given Free Church minister in this present year of grace), and pursue the broader issue to which the Bishops invite our attention, whether or not episcopacy does (in general and in the long run) secure the unity and continuity, and we may add, the vitality and catholicity of the life of the Church. I believe we shall be able to turn back on the old controversy from a new common standpoint, when we have gone some way together along the new road of investigation here pointed out.

How far, then, we may ask, is episcopacy justified in its claim to secure the unity and continuity of the life of the Church? Once this question comes to be seriously considered, the old phrase which spoke of the episcopate as the *exclusive channel of grace* will, I think, soon be forgotten in favour of a truer claim for it as *the great safeguard of catholicity* and so of unity; not the only safeguard, nor the sufficient safeguard, but an indispensable part of the safeguard. An appeal to the facts will certainly not justify any exclusive or absolute claim. Whether the appeal be in the matter of doctrine or worship or piety of life, no Church system can claim to have been a great success in securing catholicity.[1] And catholicity in these matters is essential; for catholicity is the only form of unity which can survive. The boundless activity of the Spirit of God in man will never allow him to rest content with a less than

[1] I use the word here in its strict sense of inclusiveness.

inclusive unity, for man is essentially an explorer till he finds out all there is to discover.

Applying to our various polities, then, the test of their contribution to catholicity, it is clear at once that none is sufficient. I think it is generally true that the episcopal system has secured a greater catholicity of worship and of piety. I doubt very much if it has secured a better understanding of the body of Christian truth. I think it would be found on examination that the Scottish Professoriate (to take a favourable instance) has been for long a better instrument for the transmission of the faith of the Church in its true completeness and perspective than has the English Episcopate. But neither can claim to be a really adequate instrument, judged by modern educational standards. At the best the Church systems of the past have all failed lamentably, as all past educational systems have failed, to do justice to the infinitely varied capacities of men for understanding, for worship, and for godliness. They have been too much afraid of the evil in man and, therefore, too suspicious of the unknown. They have been far too greatly concerned with the maintenance of an accepted average based on the study of what has been, far too little exercised with the task of developing the fresh potentialities of the individuals who are to shape the future. The great function of Bishops, in Father Kelly's apologetic, is to check extravagance, to curb enthusiasm, to exercise everywhere a moderating influence. Authority must have this function; but who is responsible in our Church systems for encouraging initiative, and securing through the

Church a quick circulation of the nascent ideas and impulses which the Spirit is constantly begetting in men?

For the real vitality of the Church, for the catholicity that is anxious not only to protect its tradition from errors of thought, but to enrich it with new expressions of practical devotion, neither episcopacy alone, nor independency alone, nor presbyterian rule alone, is adequate. They are required in combination. In isolation they all fail. We may recognize in episcopacy (especially as it is expounded by the three Bishops in *Lambeth and Reunion*) a wonderful instrument for combining the exercise of authority with the graces of personality, heightened, at its consecration, by a sense of unique responsibility. But the Lambeth Appeal itself fully recognizes the need to regulate that exercise of power by submitting it to some democratic check and largely increasing the amount of conference that goes on between those in authority amongst themselves and again between themselves and those who live under their leadership.

Now, this principle of fraternal co-operation, which episcopacy is now recognizing as needed to qualify its own function of paternal oversight, is one with which the Free Churches have made special experiments. We have experience to contribute here. Up to a point we have succeeded, by our assertion of the single principle of brotherhood in spiritual matters, in securing through our Churches a strong circulation of the life blood of the Catholic faith. Standing for that principle of "loyalty to the fellowship," which the Bishops now proclaim to be

more Christian than the exercise of any powers of control or command, we have learned to recognize, within our limitations, "the restraints of truth and of love." In my view we have failed, as episcopacy has failed, to realize the complete idea of the Church, because we have tried to build our Christian organization upon a single principle. Or if we have allowed another principle to operate, we have done so with no sufficient sense of its right to compare in importance with its fellow. The Bishops may be in danger of doing this again to-day, in spite of their new-found recognition of the principle of democratic fraternity. We each tend to regard the one principle as primary, the other as but secondary, the one as the pillar in our temple, the other a mere capital, the one as of the "esse," the other only of the "bene esse" of the Church. But how we can justify this discrimination I fail to see.

It is because of this one-sidedness in the past that we have none of us succeeded in circulating throughout our Churches the whole of our spiritual wealth. In some respects the Church has never been a healthy organism. It was not a healthy organism in the palmy days when it was still undivided, any more than it is now; for then the principle of unconstitutional rule was too largely in the ascendant. But was it to be expected that the problem of ecclesiastical polity should be solved early in the history of the Church, or that the initial achievement should be the true and final one? If we may take an analogy from the slow growth of our political insight in general, it is to be expected rather that the

true achievement will be one of the final achievements of redeemed humanity. "After all, why should the first crude attempts of the Church to secure uniformity of organization be regarded as setting the standard for all time? There was manifestly some serious flaw in the structure or we should not be where we are now. But is not the achievement of a polity truly harmonizing the claims of freedom and order indicated by all our experience in the Church and State to be a final rather than an early achievement of Christian inspiration."[1] Part failure or incomplete success is therefore no disproof of the reality of our inspiration. But it should be a caution against our claiming that any such partial expressions of the Christian principles of administration as we have yet witnessed in the Church should have the right to be regarded as an exclusive condition of health and vitality.

No Church, it seems to me, can be right in saying to any other Church, "This principle of ours, though it has not been exercised correctly by us, is yet the essential principle governing the communication of ministerial authority, and without it your ministry is palpably not correct." The truth would seem rather to be that we have each, by the grace of God, been enabled to preserve a measure of grace and a degree of catholicity for which we should thank Him, but, as towards one another, make no unconditional demands. Our Churches are none of them sufficiently catholic (i.e. inclusive) to make any great

[1] See "The Nature of Christian Unity" in *The Interpreter* for January, 1920.

stand upon the adequacy of their past. As against one another we may each make a fair case. Before the ideal we each stand condemned. "We all of us claim that we have maintained a society in which the Word has been duly preached, the sacraments duly administered, and a ministry duly maintained according to the mind of Christ; but if our present mutual recognition of each other's standing in Christ means anything, it means that we can none of us claim that the members and ministers of our respective Christian societies have been living in charity with their fellow-Christians for generations and generations. We have all been living in schism, and our idea of the Church has been derived from schismatic Churches. If we are right in admitting, as we do now admit, that each body has stood for some neglected emphasis in Christian truth, then we can none of us claim that we have nurtured our folk in a truly Catholic view of Christ and of Christianity. And, in the light of what we are now coming to feel a Church's duty to be in revealing the mind of Christ upon questions of Christian duty in the social world, we can none of us claim to have given to our members the nurture which they should receive from a true Church."[1]

I submit that we ought each of us, on the basis of this common failure, to abate our claims for the full recognition of our respective churchmanship. We have recognized the presence of Christ in each other's fellowship and ministry. Is not that enough? Without further prolonging the controversy whether our past ministries have been "valid" (or "regular,"

[1] *The Interpreter*, January, 1920, p. 112.

as we now say), can we not all agree that the past has been so much impaired by our separation that it is time we came together with as little as possible said in justification of the mistakes of the past, but with our whole attention given to the discovery of the true course for the future. As against the Bishops, I would urge, on this principle, that the demand for the episcopal ordination of our ministries to be recognized as a pre-requisite of negotiation, is an over-emphasis on the value of the order hitherto attained in the episcopal communions. On the same principle, I would urge that we Free Churchmen should not press the claim for our own recognition as Churches or parts of the one Church any further. Surely we have received already the recognition which we especially value—the recognition of the active grace of God in us and in our ministries. To ask more is to ask for an untruth. The Episcopalians have no more right to recognize our Church order as having been adequate, while it neglected the emphasis upon unity which they supremely value, than we to regard their Church order as having been adequate, while it denied the Church rights of the people of Christ.

We ought, I think, also to recognize that it is harder for the Episcopalian to give his approval to our past order than it is for us to give our approval to his, for he is, on principle, a stickler for points of order and we are, on principle, rather easy-going in such matters. But there is a deeper argument than this. To ask the Anglican for an unconditional recognition of our Churches as Churches, is virtually

to ask him to recognize that we have been governed in our polity by the aim of securing the effective unity and continuity of the Church. For that is the idea emphatically associated in his mind with good Churchmanship, and it is the idea which episcopacy embodies for him. It is, on the contrary, the particular side of Churchmanship on which we have been weak. So far from deliberately organizing for it, we have rather left it to chance and to the future. Is it at all fair to ask the Episcopalian to attach to our Church life the particular label he uses for the Churchmanship which has unity as its especial aim? Granted that we are bound to criticize the present proposals for episcopalian ordination, I submit that we should not encumber the proceedings by asking for a preliminary and unconditional recognition of our orders up till now. And, looking to the future, I would urge that our energies should be thrown rather into the positive attempt to secure that the Church order of the future provides for the due practical religious freedom and autonomy of individual Christians and groups, than into the negative attempt to secure that the formal procedure which is adopted is unexceptionable. We are not experts in matters of form: we are, or should be, well versed in securing the interests of a free spiritual democracy.

Even there we are bound to tread humbly; for surely, as a matter of fact, we have to confess to a good deal of weakness in our own Church order. Leaving aside the Presbyterian Churches, which may, perhaps, have a better record in this matter, we in the Free Churches have not succeeded in carrying the

inspiration and sense of spiritual guidance which we experience in our smaller gatherings, and in the conduct of our sectional affairs, into the larger synods and assemblies of our Churches. In the best of our little households of faith, and especially in country places where a good tradition has had time to grow strong in isolation from disturbing influences, we have learned to govern ourselves with a sense of direct, indisputable, and altogether marvellous guidance of the Spirit of Christ. But in our large assemblies we have done little more than substitute the rule of the majority for the rule of oligarchies, and sometimes not succeeded even in that. If there be any marked exception to this statement it is in the case of the Quakers; and they have never had to face the test of a large membership. They have indeed established a polity based upon the unbroken maintenance of friendly personal relationship and mutual understanding, and the refusal ever to override another's conscience; yet without abandoning the attempt to reach some harmony of thought. The rest of us have never succeeded in making an instrument of Church government which enables us to keep throughout our ranks the fulness of agreement that is our ideal. We have never, for example, succeeded in restraining the freakishness which breaks out always in ungoverned masses of men, and which shows itself in the many curious denominations which adorn the hem of our garment. We have never really succeeded in exercising the functions of central government so as to harmonize our principle of freedom with the demands of order. Our tempta-

tion is to the policy of *laissez-faire*, which has not been an unequivocal success in the ecclesiastical world any more than in the industrial world. Our lack of recognized authority has resulted in the practical neglect of important sides of the Church's responsibilities and, in some denominations at least, in a good deal of hardship to our ministers who have been left with no one to whom to turn in the difficulties of their isolated ministries. Nor have we done anything like as much as leadership might do to call forth and use the gifts of individuals in the Church's service, and to make the fellowship of all Christian believers actual, throughout our Churches.

Our lack of a recognized principle of authority, clearly formulated and applied, is answerable also for grave failures in our denominational procedure. For it has placed the central business of the Church in the charge of committees and councils which have had no other recognized canons of procedure than those which govern the conduct of secular assemblies. In all such assemblies, as we know, the corporate decision is painfully liable to be reached on grounds quite other than the power of the truth over the sensitive conscience. Popular gifts of speech will give a policy a fortuitous advantage. Custom will load the scales in favour of the opinions of certain recognized "leaders," who yet have not the sense of responsibility, or the qualification of detailed knowledge, or the regular access to the minds of those for whom they legislate, to give them the real authority of leadership. Time militates against the adequate consideration of the greater issues in large assem-

blies, whilst strange cross-currents of opinion will deflect conviction from its proper course. These are among the dangers to which government by committee is subject. They call for a fresh thinking out of the way in which authoritative judgments should be formed. I would not, for a moment, try to set up a pitched battle between the principle of individual, episcopal rule, and the principle of government by committees and majorities. I am convinced that the question needs much closer and more widely informed investigation than I am able to give it, and that all the alternative means of vesting control have not been named in my argument.[1] But enough will have been said to suggest that the episcopal principle may be really needed to qualify the representative principle upon which we have in general proceeded.

It is not for a Free Churchman to analyse the corresponding defects of Church life under an unqualified episcopacy. The Episcopalians of the present day are not, however, backward in such analysis. The point for both of us is our need of one another for the full vitality of the Church. If, on investigation, it should turn out that the episcopalian principle does in fact need recognition in our Free Church order—not as a mere matter of convenience and efficiency but in the interests of truth and love—so that we should decide to revise our procedure in some substantial fashion towards the episcopal procedure, then I hope we should be large-minded enough to allow some formal recognition of the new

[1] For a discussion of the spiritual principles of ecclesiastical organization, see *Pathways to Christian Unity*, pp. 63 ff.

weight we have come to attach to episcopacy. (Whether or not such recognition would take the form at present proposed, only time can show.) But if we are not so convinced, I for one would be most unhappy to see Free Churchmen giving to episcopacy any merely formal recognition. For I hold that it is the part of Free Churchmen, not to resist forms or belittle forms, but to make sure that forms correspond with realities and give outward expression to what is true in fact.

CHAPTER IX.

The Sacraments of a United Church.

HOWEVER much our existing groups may decide to retain their own individuality in worship in the united Church, there must be some services which are the recognized acts of worship of the whole body. We are coming to a time when we shall want to join in acts of worship which are not sectional but common. And amongst these, and, indeed, paramount amongst them, will be the service of Holy Communion. Here is an urgent reason for bringing our practices in worship into comparison and our theories into accord. We have therefore to come more nearly to terms in our conception of the legitimacy, the value, and the limitations of fixed formulæ and regulated acts of worship—ritual and ceremonial. In the past we have tended merely to oppose our Free Church ideals of freedom to the Catholic ideals of order, regarding freedom as of the essence of Christianity, fixity as of its perversion. Of late we have departed from the absolutism of this opposition. The Free Churches have borrowed a certain amount of liturgical properties from the Anglicans, and they in turn have claimed more freedom, especially in the post-war transformation of Evensong. The interchange has gone far enough

for one to say that we have now recognized each other's systems as permissible and useful up to a point. We have thrown off the old idea that we wear the liveries of different kings. It is time, however, that we went a stage further and explored the fitness of particular forms and particular degrees of fixity for particular purposes in worship. It is time we determined the precise points at which the use of form and rite needs to be safeguarded against its inherent dangers. We shall need to have a good footing in this common study of the principles of worship if we are to reach any happy solution of the problem of worship in common.

Two recent articles in *The Challenge*[1] have claimed that there is no deep fundamental cleavage between the free and the ritual ideas of worship. An element of symbolism and of dramatic representation is found, e.g., in the Nonconformist sermon, just as surely as it is found in the setting forth of the Gospel dramatically in the ordered sequence of thought and action of the Catholic Eucharist. It is not, of course, so plainly or so lavishly employed in the first case as in the second; but both alike make use of the powers of emotional suggestion and in their use of familiar phrases and appealing gestures in worship. By the one these thought-forms which extend the use of language are mainly confined to hymns and tunes; by the other they are equally used in the words and acts of common prayer. These articles argue that a true principle of art requires the bold use of every known form of representation and expression in

[1] August, 1920.

public worship. Otherwise the human spirit cannot sufficiently present to itself the glory of God and cannot sufficiently express its adoration. But equally a true principle of art requires that the forms of artistic expression used in worship should be appropriate to their purpose. Hence there arises the puritan demand for austerity, simplicity, and dignity in the forms that are used for the worship of God in Christ.

It would not be fitting to pursue this subject further here. My plea is simply that this is a subject for common investigation and for the discovery of common principles for the worship of the future. Here in particular there is a demand upon us Free Churchmen to bring our principles to bear, not for the demolition of ritual and ceremony, but for its restriction within the limits which a wise religious psychology shall demand. For I think there can be no possible manner of doubt that the acts of common worship of the whole Church are the occasions, of all others, when fixed ritual and ceremony are necessary to the unity and continuity of the Church's worship, and where also they should be the most keenly scrutinized from the puritan point of view. If we are to have forms of worship in which Christians can come to feel at home, they must embody both the desire of the institutionalist for prescribed forms and the desire of the puritan for simplicity.

And, further, if we admit the fitness of an instituted method for the common act of worship of the whole Church, and if we desire to enter wholeheartedly into it, we need to reconsider our common

Free Church supposition that acts and words of worship which are regulated are more impersonal than those which are spontaneous. Surely the acts and words of the traditional Communion service are determined not by impersonal considerations of any kind, but by the known personal experience of multitudes whose needs and impulses gave rise to it in the first instance, and have confirmed its fitness in countless instances all down the ages. And each time these words and acts are repeated, they may be filled again with the personal feeling and understanding of those who use them. The service comes then to be, for those who have given themselves to it, an epitome of countless prayers and sermons, full of the memories of inspired moments, powerful to rekindle the holy aspirations, visions and revelations of truth and duty given through its instrumentality in the past. Influences such as these are all of them intensely personal in their appeal, however dependent in origin upon their institutional form. Countless numbers of us can testify to the extraordinary power of this service to present to our soul the vision of Christ, and to induce in us the kind of response we would fain make to Him. So strong and rich and unfailing is this power, so independent of our particular variability of mood, that it is not to be wondered at if we sometimes speak as though the power of God rested in the service itself.

We reach here a point at which it is necessary to urge upon Protestants in the name of Christian charity, that they will allow to others a greater liberty of thought than they are wont to do. To some Pro-

testants the "Catholic" conception of the sacrament seems to endow a particular combination of physical acts and speeches, performed by men appointed in a particular way, with a miraculous, quasi-magical power to bring about in those who participate in it a substantive change of nature, not necessarily accompanied by any corresponding psychological changes and experiences. This process seems so alien to the genius of Christianity, so contradictory of the principle of the Incarnation, so discontinuous with the rest of our experience, that our instinct is to condemn it as a survival of pagan superstition. Moreover, from certain quarters we hear a theory of sacramental processes which makes essential the very interpretation of the matter to which I have alluded, an interpretation which seems to us most unnatural and unworthy of the Name of our Lord. I am not for one moment going to plead for that theory, as I have often heard it expounded: it is monstrous to me. But I do plead for the reality of the experience that lies behind the theory among multitudes of Christian people in the bodies whose religious expression takes the institutional form. Again, I recognize that this experience has a degree of independence of the personal spirituality of those who administer the sacraments, and even of those who receive them, that lends itself easily to a theory which deprecates, and to my mind erroneously deprecates, the personal element in its efficacy. Yet I plead that while the psychological interpretation of their experience is the right and sufficient one, it is one which we cannot fairly insist upon at a time when psycho-

logical interpretations of great processes are to many minds novel and disturbing. Is it not enough to know that behind the sacramental theory to which we cannot subscribe there is a reality of experience which we can both understand and appreciate, and even a certain rough congruity between the experience and the theory advanced in explanation of it? May one not accept the fact and hold one's own theory to account for it, believing that longer time and more sympathetic contact between Catholic and Protestant minds will find a better expression of the whole truth, relating its objective result more truly with the subjective processes by which it is attained?

Moreover, one may well be chary of repudiating the theory which affirms the certainty of securing spiritual results from physical acts of Christian loyalty merely because it does not attempt to explain the process. We have been too ready in the past to divorce the physical from the spiritual. We have been in danger of emptying that which is physical of any natural spiritual meaning. We have tended to allow spiritual value only to personal self-consciousness. We have not conceived it possible that spiritual value, having been created in consciousness, could communicate itself, at least as a potentiality of fresh spiritual value, through physical media in which no divine operation through consciousness is traceable. And yet all the time we are daily witnesses of the miracle of birth, whereby consciousness is created in new physical centres through " purely physical processes," if any such things there be. Surely the net-work of the physical and the spiritual is too closely woven

for any analysis to cleave them quite apart. "Life is a psycho-physical unity," and it becomes ever more and more reasonable and scientific to believe that psychical and spiritual processes may be independent of *conscious* psychological experiences. There is a place for self-consciousness, and for the supremacy of the will in consciousness. In the response which a person makes to the offer of the Gospel the conscious will is supremely significant. But in the transmission of the message of the Gospel, in the wooing of the soul by the spirit of Christ, the self-conscious will is not everything. Our Lord may woo us with a touch no less than with a word. It is not an experience altogether discontinuous with our ordinary experience that we should find ourselves sometimes spiritually changed through processes which are largely or even quite unselfconscious. There ought, no doubt, to be a due and discoverable proportion between the conscious influences which build up Christian character and those which are not conscious, and there must be a congruity between the one and the other. But our psychological acumen is not at present equal to the task of discriminating in these matters, and for the time being, therefore, it behoves us to leave a good deal of latitude to imperfect theories.

But, allowing for the necessary tentativeness of any handling of this subject at the moment, I would submit that if processes are to have spiritual value, though they may not work by direct appeal to the self-conscious mind, they ought to be psychologically congruous with their purpose, and intrinsically

capable of making a coherent appeal to consciousness. And to me the traditional sacrament of Holy Communion, as traditionally administered, has this congruity of form and capability of intellectual interpretation. The congruity of the different parts of the service will not in general be denied, and I need not therefore dwell upon that part of my argument. What is much more likely to be disputed is the congruity of the rite as administered by an episcopally ordained minister, in a traditional dress, according to a traditional rubric. I will not go to the length of saying that the thing could not fittingly be otherwise, but I do claim that there is an artistic fitness in the whole dramatic setting of the service which goes far to explain and justify it in detail.[1]

For, think what we are striving for. We are striving for an expression of the fact that we modern Englishmen, a handful of Yorkshiremen let us say, are taking our place in the great body of those who in all countries and all generations since Christ lived upon earth have worshipped Him as God. Before those stupendous majesties, the majesty of His Person whom we adore, the majesty of the great body with whom we are one in adoration, we should desire to magnify that which is elemental and common in our worship. We should desire to minimize, though not to efface, our idiosyncrasies, both those incidental to our time and place in history, and those incidental

[1] I am not arguing that the Eucharistic service, as now conducted either in the Church of England or in the Roman Church, contains no elements foreign to the spirit of Christ nor that it is incapable of improvement in detail. Not all that is most ancient is entirely inerrant.

to the peculiar facets of our particular faith. We should want to clothe our worship all but wholly in forms of speech and act which connect us in fact and in idea with the great mass of worshipful Christians. And as for ourselves, so also for our minister, let him be as much as possible a representative person, as little as possible a particular individual, with the mental and spiritual accent of his time. This argument for a common form of universal worship is reinforced again from the point of view of continuity between generation and generation, country and country. If we are to gather associations richly, we can find no instrument psychologically better fitted for doing so than the continuation of a noble rite.

Returning now to the ministrant, the veiling of whose individuality in representative dress and gestures we approved, can we approve equally the traditional manner of his appointment? Is there any fitness in a fixed tradition here also? I think there is. I think it is fitting that the ministrant shall be one whose manner of appointment causes him to think of himself, and to be thought of, as a person who is acting representatively on behalf of the whole Church and not merely out of the limited store of his own individual experience of God. I take for granted that the power of ministry which any representative can derive from his representativeness will depend primarily, not upon the particular mode of his appointment, but upon the degree to which the life force of the Church of which he is a minister operates strongly, and as a whole, at every point in it. Episcopal ordination will be able to influence a man's

power of ministry just in so far as the system of episcopacy does succeed in practice in saturating all its representative personalities with the Church's own richness of Christian faith and feeling. But on this supposition I would claim that a ministrant who is ordained by processes calculated to awaken in him and in Christian people generally a sense of his responsibility to be above all things a representative of the whole faith and experience of Christ's Church, is the best ministrant for the occasion. There is an artistic fitness, a psychological congruity, missing if the ministrant is not so ordained. We are here brought up against the Bishops' demand for the episcopal ordination of all the Church's ministers, and to that I now turn.

CHAPTER X.

Episcopal Ordination.

IT is a matter of the first importance that an all-inclusive form of Communion service, suitably administered, should be available for all who desire and would understand it. I therefore plead that, in order to make this possible, we should accept the Bishops' plea for a ministry having the acknowledged authority of the whole Church, which should administer on behalf of the whole Church the Church's central sacrament of Christian unity; and that those who have not the recognized authorization should not, in general, be held competent for the office. And I would urge that this means, also, our accepting in some form or other the Bishops' plea for the episcopal ordination of such a ministry.

There are, clearly, two grave objections to the proposal from the Free Church side, the first of which is that it establishes a condition for the administration of this sacrament which goes beyond the condition we require for the administration of the sacraments of our own Churches. Can we allow this without derogating from the meaning and dignity of our own sacraments in the past and present? I admit the grave difficulty, and put forward the suggestion I have to meet it with great tentativeness. I suggest that there is a distinction between sacraments, even

between our different forms of the sacrament of Holy Communion, distinctions which are not trifling, and are not derogatory to the worth of any. In all such sacraments we hold communion face to face with our Lord: we gather at the foot of His Cross to receive the benefits of His Passion, to swear allegiance to His Kingdom and to claim the powers of His ascended Life. His real Presence makes the Sacrament of Holy Communion; but it does not exhaust its particularity of meaning. The same sacrament will have different content for us in different circumstances, as, for example, before battle or before ordination, or at the moment of reception into the membership of Christ's Church. May it not also have different content when administered according to differing rites?

For me, the particular content of the Eucharist of the Catholic bodies is that it emphasizes my communion (in Christ) with the whole body of Christ's people in all climes and ages. My own Congregational Communion, on the other hand, emphasizes in a rather particular manner my communion in Christ with a particular company of His people, with whom I am bound to a particular local effort to be His fellow servants in the Gospel. Not that in the first case I am wholly forgetful of the particular congregation, or in the second case wholly forgetful of the larger company of the redeemed. The contrast is far from absolute, but it is real and significant. My tryst is, in the first case, much more consciously with the whole uncounted multitude of the saints, and more free from all local and temporal associations. It is, in the

second case, much more coloured by the consecration of particular affections, intimacies, and responsibilities. Each is essential and irreplaceable. I crave both. I can, indeed, make either mean the other, but only by a process of deliberate argument with myself. They naturally stand for different elements of my fellowship with Christ, different emphases upon my relations in Christ with others. Both are essential and both precious.

It follows that the kind of ministry appropriate to the one is inappropriate to the other. Just as the communion which is primarily representative of the Real Presence of our Lord with His whole Church requires a representative administrant, so the communion which is primarily representative of a spiritual family life, constituted by our Lord for happy familiarity and special intimacy in His service, should be free from the rule which governs the procedure of the body which is more widely scattered in time and place. It is even congruous with its character that it should be administered at times by laymen.

I have taken extreme instances, and it might not be so easy to prescribe the precise kind of ordination appropriate, let us say, to a Presbyterian or Methodist Communion, which represents a larger connection and yet a connection which by the tragedy of history has been forced into a position of separation from the main (episcopal) trunk of the Church's life. Its administration, it would seem, would need to be more governed by rule, and its theory of ministerial representativeness more defined. And so, indeed, it is. The facts are again congruous.

The second difficulty which arises, from the Free Church side, is the difficulty of qualifying a ministry for the administration of a common or fully Catholic rite without introducing into the ordination of some of its ministers ideas to which they are quite antipathetic, thereby impairing their sincerity, placing them in an ambiguous relation to their present ministries within their own churches, and not really making them wholehearted ministers of the common rite. My proposal to meet this difficulty is, I admit, a difficult one, but I think it is worth making. I submit that no attempt should be made to make all our ministries conform to a single type. Let there be some of our present ministers who qualify for the special ministry of the United Communion service, and others who do not. There are some of us who could quite happily do so without violating any principle or blinking any issues. We should do so all the more easily, if it was patent that our action could not possibly be taken to imply any judgment upon our previous fitness for the ministerial responsibility hitherto exercised within our own borders. And that would manifestly be the case if there were some who took the step and others who did not. The result would be to establish a limited ministry (drawn from the ranks of all Churches), authorized to exercise sacramental functions for the whole Church—a sort of overlapping fringe carrying more than their present commissions. If this step were taken, it would be probable that those who would wish to qualify for the wider ministry would be so far sympathetic with the idea of such a ministry being exer-

cised according to constitutional forms having some traditional authority, that they could accept the method of episcopal ordination in some such form as the Bishops have proposed.

Whether the Bishops could be satisfied with this limited response to their suggestion is another matter. It might cause difficulties in the carrying out of the proposals for Church government which are associated in their minds with the proposal in its original form. But as it would seem to represent the truth of the present position very accurately, one would hope that the problem of devising a suitable procedure for the ordering of the common business of the reunited Church would not prove insuperable. To the Bishops I would urge, against the scheme in its wider form, that, if it were accepted at the present time, it would be calculated to give the authority which properly belongs only to those who fully understand and are profoundly convinced of the reasonableness of institutional forms of religious expression to a large number of people who have not these prerequisites. From a Free Church standpoint that would be to commit the cardinal error of establishing a form having no true correspondence with the truth—a thing both ethically and psychologically disastrous. I imagine that the procedure would not be any more satisfactory from the episcopal standpoint.

Whether this proposal, if adopted, would tend to perpetuate itself, or whether it would prove to be a purely interim stage which would gradually melt into a position of almost universally accepted joint commission, it is difficult to say. A ministry which

might seem to have two grades is open to serious criticism. On the other hand, there are comprised in the Church's ministry such very varied functions —of teaching and prophecy, of pastoral oversight, and of officially representative action—that it might be of itself a very good thing in an age of specialization and division of function to recognize more clearly these undeniable distinctions. But, in any case, I think it would introduce into Free Church life ideas and experiences which would tend towards an increasing understanding of Catholic practices, and which would lead to an increasing desire for the double ministerial authorization. And surely it is quite essential that we should proceed thus by stages to the consummation of our unity, each stage giving us better means of understanding each other's positions and sharing each other's experiences, and so preparing us for a further stage. The sharing of Free Church fellowship by Catholics, and the sharing of Catholic sacramental experiences by Free Churchmen, must go a long way before we reach the degree of understanding and mutual confidence which are needed for the well-being of a united Church.

There remains to be said one most important thing about the way in which, if at all, episcopal ordination should be given to the ministers of non-episcopal Churches. The root difficulty of the business is the difficulty of achieving a real reciprocity.[1] It is so hard to get away from the appearance of exalting the

[1] I pass over the minor difficulty created by the fact that episcopal ordination has been and is still practised in the Church of England in an unconstitutional form which passes over the right and responsibility of the laity in the matter.

episcopal transmission of grace, and even its external form, into a place of pre-eminent importance with nothing else worthy of a place beside it. Let us get back then to the reality behind the form, and recognize that episcopal ordination is the normal means of expressing the participation of the Church of all times and places in the authorization of its ministers, and the acceptance of them by such a commission. The episcopal words and acts are the technicalities, however honourable and important technicalities, in the spiritual transaction which they express and symbolize. Now, if this be kept in mind, I think it will be clear that, however important it may be, as a technicality, to preserve in the new form of ordination the old traditional words and acts, the more important point is the real spiritual concurrence of all the Church's representatives and spokesmen in what is going forward, and their real success in importing into the ceremony some expression of the primary meaning which Church and ministry have for them. Most of all should the ceremony express to the ordinand his sense of submitting himself to a worthy tradition and a worthy authority.

It is, therefore, supremely important that, if there is to be a joint ministry of the Churches, it should receive its specific authorization by the authorities of the Churches acting together, rather than that our ministers should obtain their additional authorization in any piecemeal way, one seeking in one quarter and another in another quarter for authorization so far lacking. Indeed, I think that as a matter of truth, it must be done that way. The reunited Church will

not be the mere sum of our present forces. It will be, in a very real sense, a new body having new powers, new spiritual faculties, new capacities for apprehending and serving Christ. The only authority which can fitly authorize any ministry in that body is a new joint authority in which new powers are vested. We should be misrepresenting the matter, if we Free Churchmen were to go *privatim et seriatim* to the Bishops of the Church of England for a supplementary episcopal commission to make good, as it were, the hypothetical defects of our ministry in the past. That would be an unworthy formality. We should go rather for the newly needed authorization to some newly constituted authority which would perforce include the Bishops, and it would be for them to secure that the adopted method of authorization should embody all that in their tradition is considered necessary to the fullest authorization of the Christian ministry on the technical side. I believe that the proposed United Church of South India is thinking of following this method by which it will jointly recommission its ministry as a whole, rather than require the minister of one body to turn to the representative of any other for a mere supplement to his previous authorization.

So much for the formal points; but they are not all. If the ministry is indeed to receive the full authorization of the Church in all its present fulness and variety of life, it must in connection with its fuller ordination be spiritually baptized into the ideals of the Free Churchman. It must be subjected to intellectual and spiritual influences from Free Church

quarters. It must, in some measure, learn to take joy and pride in a new-found tolerance of freedom. There must, therefore, be this tolerance, and the ministers chosen as ministers of the whole Church must in some way be able to satisfy the representatives of the Free Churches that they understand and value what are to us the essential notes of a true Church. It is not so easy to prescribe the procedure that would secure this. It might take the form of some explicit acknowledgment of the liberties claimed by us for our variations of practice in regard, for example, to the administration of sacraments, or the use of the creeds. It might take the form of an undertaking to seek the spiritual fellowship of Free Churchmen and strive to understand their spiritual treasures. Whatever the form—and of the two suggested the latter would seem to be more true to the spirit of fellowship and freedom which we cherish—some means are needed to secure that the new ministry, from whatever quarter it has been recruited, consists of men who desire to be loyal to the best they can discover both in the tradition of the Church as a whole and in the tradition of each of its now separated parts.

CHAPTER XI.

The Next Steps.

IN my last few chapters I have been appealing first in one direction and then in the other, for certain modifications of the position so far officially defined—modifications which would (it seems to me) enable us to draw together without the denial of any principle that has been yet insisted upon. But any modification of official opinion must be a matter of years, and it is urgent that without any delay whatever we should be taking advantage of the improvement in our mutual relations which Lambeth makes possible. This final chapter is given, therefore, to practical proposals for the immediate increase of Christian fellowship within the limits which are at present prescribed.

1. *Christian Adult Co-education.*

It is essential to the true idea of the Church that its members who are neighbours geographically, should be neighbourly in their enjoyment of a common spiritual life. They should know each other personally, should have Christian intercourse with one another, and should co-operate in Christ's service. Especially should this be true of their leaders, who should be the personal links which bind the whole

community into one. This unity should not have only sacramental expression ; it should express itself in common thought and action. Christ's followers should be manifestly one body, living a common life, the better to devote their resources and energies to the service of the Kingdom of God in their own neighbourhood.

This idea of local co-operation is present, and to a certain extent prominent, in the Bishops' recommendation for Inter-Church Councils appointed for one purpose and another. I have already urged that the scope and method of this co-operation should be intensely Christian, calling men and women into association with the strongest sanctions and expressing itself in the most intimate terms—involving common prayer and common study of the mind of Christ. If it is not thus pronouncedly Christian, the impulse it will give toward Christian unity may be very slight indeed, and partly offset by the disadvantage of accustoming the members of the different Churches to limit their co-operation to the surface levels. If it goes deep enough, it may be a true forerunner of the completer unity we seek.

Too often, however, co-operation is limited to the sphere of action, and to that part of that sphere in which agreement may be found easily among people of good-will. That is, of course, a tremendous limitation. It is rather through fellowship on matters which are fraught with the possibilities of disagreement that unity is to be furthered. Co-operation limited to the sphere of action and agreement is sheer undenominationalism. We want co-operation in

spheres where our different traditions give rise to different opinions. It can only be through the friendly discussion of these differences that we shall reach mutual understanding.

Here, then, is a call to a new policy of Christian co-education, the co-education not of the sexes but of the sects. Let us at once inaugurate throughout the Churches a generous policy of united Christian education upon all those questions of Christian doctrine or Christian duty which are suited for discussion. The times call for a big advance in the educational work of our Churches. It is a scandal that we do not provide our members with an education in Christian doctrine and duty equal to the standard of their general education. Why should we not enter this almost untouched field of Christian education together and make it a means to Christian unity? If anything adequate is to be made of the business, it will obviously tax our resources to the breaking point if we attempt it denominationally. Why not interdenominationally? Why not regard the Churches as one body for their higher education in religious knowledge? The principles of education would favour such a step. Denominational education, except for beginners and learners of feeble mental capacity, is educationally condemned. Let us get together as fellow seekers in the school of Christ.

Consider, for example, the opportunity of interdenominational Christian fellowship in the work of applying Christian thought to social and political practice. It is a great subject and, as I have already urged, the absence of clear Christian thinking upon

it is seriously inhibiting Christian faith and Christian action. Our half-hearted loyalty to the faith and to the service of our fellows is primarily due to our failure to see our way on just those matters. Moreover, the work of discovering the way is intrinsically one for round-table treatment rather than for pulpit or platform treatment, and it is therefore one in which denominational segregation is manifestly absurd. Such discussion, if thorough in its appeal to Christian principle, would be bound to serve the cause of unity by the new mental and spiritual contacts which it would establish between the more alert and thoughtful members of our Churches.

The study of the way of prayer, the steps in the growth of the soul, the value and use of the different means of grace, is one perhaps of narrower appeal. We do not want too many people to be self-conscious on such matters. On the other hand, the responsibility of guiding the spiritual development of youth is very widely distributed. The number of those who exercise teaching and pastoral functions in the Church is considerable. We have also to take into account the large and increasing number of parents and others who are called upon to guide and teach their juniors in these matters, and who are no longer able to hand down traditional views till they have explored them for themselves more thoroughly and more critically than the last generation ever felt it necessary to do. Why should we not at once provide, in every neighbourhood, for all who exercise in any of our Churches any of these varied teaching

functions, opportunities for united study of the whole subject of spiritual growth and nurture. Such action would have the most profound and far-reaching effects in creating throughout the Church a common mind on those questions of personal religion which lie behind the questions of Church practice at present in dispute between us.

Three methods suggest themselves for this, and all are appropriate to interdenominational use. For the more serious study we should want to employ *the Tutorial Class method*, which has been successfully developed by the Workers' Educational Association, and has been applied lately by Albert Mansbridge, its founder, to subjects of religious study.[1] *In a Study Circle*, the thread of common thought is provided, not by a tutor, but by a textbook; and the subject must obviously be one upon which the members of the circle have a good deal to contribute out of their personal experience, or one on which they can readily acquire knowledge in other ways. *In a typical Fellowship meeting*, even the textbook thread is absent, and the responsibility for the sequence of thought is divided between the several members, helped, perhaps, by an agreed syllabus. The method is excellently adapted for the exchange of experience on great matters where traditions differ, where everyone has thought a little and perhaps no

[1] The full tutorial method provides for a three years' course with a twenty-six weeks' course in each year. Each week the tutor gives an hour's lecture, which is followed by an hour's discussion, and from time to time each pupil submits an essay to the criticism of the tutor. A very close personal relationship is established between tutor and pupils, of whom there are usually from twenty to thirty in a class.

one very systematically. It is just the method for comparing experience on questions of individual Christian nurture and corporate Church life. It is also a method which anyone can begin to employ at once. To establish a local Christian college and organize tutorial classes there must be a body of convinced support; and I would plead that all who have these interests at heart should strive for that.[1] But if they fail at first to gain support for any concerted effort of the local Churches, they can begin at once themselves privately in the circle of their personal friends.[2] The new Auxiliary Movement which is now growing out of the former Auxiliary of the Student Christian Movement, is ready to facilitate all such developments.

2. *An Inter-Church Mission.*

There is no need to go further into detail in these matters. Enough will have been said to indicate a vast possibility of deeply important common educational activity, full of promise both for the quickening of Christian devotion within our Churches now and for their closer union in days to come. I plead that the seizing of this opportunity should not be left only to chance local action, but should be made the object of a big central effort, a united campaign for promoting inter-Church fellowship of the kind

[1] A few centres have already established some form of united Christian college, generally for the help of Sunday School teachers. But there is no need to limit the aim in that way.

[2] For suitable lines of work apply to the Secretary of the Auxiliary Movement, Annandale, North End Road, N.W. 11.

described—practical in aim, educational in method, spiritual in motive and appeal. The occasion calls for some notable united effort, clearly taking advantage of the improved position between us, clearly looking forward to still further expressions of unity ahead.

For the conduct of such a campaign it would be necessary to appoint a considerable number of missioners to call the Churches to this fresh venture in Christian fellowship. I should urge that their authorization should be a matter of great consideration and a good deal of ceremony, conducted jointly by the most representative persons the Churches possess. This authorization would thus be a first dramatic expression of our new-found ability to conduct together a spiritual mission.

I have asked for such a complete and notable form of authorization also because I think that the missioners appointed to such work as this should have authority to conduct the supreme acts of united Christian worship, and that their mission should, at some point of it, include such acts. It may be well that their exercise of this power should be very strictly limited. For myself, I think that I would not invite to such a united communion service as I have in mind any but those who have shown their good faith and earnestness of purpose in the quest of Christian unity by carrying out (or at least entering upon) some prescribed and not inconsiderable course of united study or fellowship touching the points at issue. And I could very well understand that other safeguards would be suitable, such as subscribing to some de-

claration of faith and intention, jointly appointed by our representative authorities. But with such safeguards and such a duly authorized ministry, I conceive it to be within the jurisdiction of the Bishops to allow at once, without transgressing the boundaries recently marked out at Lambeth, occasional acts of united communion. I believe that a limited mission of this kind, with a sacramental as well as an educational side, would not only do much to foster the spirit of unity at the moment; it would also show the way to the actual forms of Intercommunion and united ministry which the future demands.

I do not attempt to define the proposal any further, because it would be premature to do so. I want rather to express the hope that the initial terms of any such campaign, and the constant oversight of it, would be the first responsibility of the chief leaders of the Churches acting together. The campaign would be, in fact, a first experiment in joint Church government, revealing in action the lines along which such conjoint work should be done, the issues that it would raise between the authorities involved, and, generally, the necessary conditions of harmonious co-operation. It would enable us to attack the problem of mutual adjustment, not in the unpromising atmosphere of purely theoretic discussion, but with a practical and profoundly important end in view.

I return, in conclusion, to the point already urged repeatedly, but momentous enough for mention yet again. Let us, above all things, guard against a

period of comparative inaction filled only with delicate official negotiation at a time when widespread hopes of practical advance have been aroused. Such a period would have a most chilling and discouraging effect, and the missing of the opportunity for practical advance would make it far more protracted than it might otherwise be. The proposal which I have made might render the next few years a period of widespread united spiritual activity, a period of vigorous and useful educational work, developing in countless Christian people a wider and deeper sympathy with types of religious thought and practice at present beyond their ken, and thereby giving them a more exalted conception of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, toward which our faces are now resolutely set.

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